

PROCEEDINGS OF THE
113TH NATIONAL CONVENTION OF THE
VETERANS OF FOREIGN WARS
OF THE UNITED STATES

(SUMMARY OF MINUTES)



VEW

VETERANS OF FOREIGN WARS

NO ONE DOES MORE FOR VETERANS.

Reno, Nevada ::: July 21 – 25, 2012

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The proceedings of the national encampments of the United Spanish War Veterans, the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, the American Legion, the Military Order of the Purple Heart, the Veterans of World War I of the United States, Incorporated, the Disabled American Veterans, and the AMVETS (American Veterans of World War II), respectively, shall be printed annually, with accompanying illustrations, as separate House documents of the session of the Congress to which they may be submitted. [Approved October 2, 1968.]

LETTER OF TRANSMITTAL

VETERANS OF FOREIGN WARS OF THE UNITED STATES,
KANSAS CITY, MISSOURI
May, 2013

Honorable John Boehner
The Speaker U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Mr. Speaker:

In conformance with the provisions of Public Law No. 620, 90th Congress, approved October 22, 1968, I am transmitting to you herewith the proceedings of the 113th National Convention of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, held in Reno, Nevada, July 21-25, 2012, which is submitted for printing as a House document.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Allen 'Gunner' Kent". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned above the printed name and title.

Allen "Gunner" Kent
Adjutant General

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COMMANDERS-IN-CHIEF, VETERANS OF FOREIGN WARS OF THE UNITED STATES

(Including societies that amalgamated to form Veterans of Foreign Wars)

The Veterans of Foreign Service and the Army of the Philippines amalgamated at Denver, CO, August 1913, forming the Veterans of Foreign Wars as it is today. However, the birth of the order dates from September 29, 1899, when the first national officers were elected and the eligibility clause adopted. The original chapter was granted October 11, 1899.

* indicates deceased

American Veterans of Foreign Service

1899-1900	James C. Putnam *	Elected at Columbus, Ohio.
1900-1901	Maj. Will S. White *	Elected at Columbus, Ohio.
1901-1902	Maj. Will S. White *	Elected at Columbus, Ohio.
1902-1903	James Romanis *	Elected at Washington Courthouse, Ohio.
1903-1904	James Romanis *	Elected at Cincinnati, Ohio.
1904-1905	James Romanis *	Elected at Cincinnati, Ohio.
1905-1906	George Metzger *	Elected at Altoona, Pennsylvania.
1906-1907	Charles H. Devereaux *	Elected at Cincinnati, Ohio.
1907-1908	David T. Nevin *	Elected at James Exposition Grounds, Virginia.
1908-1909	J. Alfred Judge *	Elected at Lebanon, Pennsylvania.
1909-1910	J. Alfred Judge *	Elected at Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania.
1910-1911	Robert J. Woodside *	Elected at Jersey City, New Jersey.
1911-1912	Robert J. Woodside *	Elected at Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.
1912-1913	Robert J. Woodside *	Elected at Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania.

American Veterans of Foreign Service (Eastern Branch)

1903-1904	Capt. Robert S. Hansburg *	Elected at Altoona, Pennsylvania.
1904-1905	H.O. Kelly *	Elected at Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania.

(The above two organizations amalgamated September 1905, at Altoona, Pennsylvania.)

Army of the Philippines

1900-1901	Gen. Francis V. Greene *	Elected at Denver, Colorado.
1901-1902	Gen. Irving Hale *	Elected at Salt Lake City, Utah.

1902-1903	Gen. Irvin Hale *Elected at Council Bluffs, Iowa.
1903-1904	Gen. Charles King * Elected at St. Paul, Minnesota.
1904-1905	Gen. Wilder S. Metcalf *Elected at St. Louis, Missouri.
1905-1906	Col. Alfred S. Frost *Elected at Chicago, Illinois.
1906-1907	Gen. Arthur MacArthur * Elected at Des Moines, Iowa.
1907-1908	Capt. H.A. Crow * Elected at Kansas City, Missouri.
1908-1909	Maj. P.J.H. Farrell *Elected at Galesburg, Illinois.
1909-1910	Col. Charles L. Jewett * Elected at Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania.
1910-1911	A. H. Anderson *Elected at Chicago, Illinois.
1911-1912	F. Warner Karling *Elected at Detroit, Michigan.
1912-1913	F. Warner Karling *Elected at Lincoln, Nebraska.

Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States

1913-1914	Rice W. Means* Elected at Denver, Colorado.
1914-1915	Thomas Crago * Elected at Pittsburg, Pennsylvania.
1915-1916	Gus Hartung*Elected at Detroit, Michigan.
1916-1917	Albert Rabin*Elected at Chicago, Illinois.
1917-1918	William Ralston* Elected at New York, New York.
1918-1919	F. Warner Karling* Elected at Minneapolis, Minnesota.
1919-1920	F. Warner Karling* Elected at Providence, Rhode Island.
1920-1921	Robert G. Woodside* Elected at Washington, D.C.
1921-1922	Robert G. Woodside*Elected at Detroit, Michigan.
1922-1923	Tillinghast Huston* Elected at Seattle, Washington.
1923-1924	Gen. Lloyd M. Brett* Elected at Norfolk, Virginia.
1924-1925	John H. Dunn* Elected at Atlantic City, New Jersey.
1925-1926	Fred Stover*Elected at Tulsa, Oklahoma.
1926-1927	Theodore Stitt* Elected at El Paso, Texas.
1927-1928	Frank T. Strayer* Elected at Providence, Rhode Island.
1928-1929	Eugene P. Carver* Elected at Indianapolis, Indiana.
1929-1930	Kezekiah N. Duff* Elected at St. Paul, Minnesota.
1930-1931	Paul C. Wolman* Elected at Baltimore, Maryland.
1931-1932	Darold D. DeCoe* Elected at Kansas City, Missouri.
1932-1933	Adm. Robert E. Coontz*Elected at Sacramento, California.
1933-1934	James E. Van Zandt*Elected at Milwaukee, Wisconsin.
1934-1935	James E. Van Zandt* Elected at Louisville, Kentucky.
1935-1936	James E. Van Zandt* Elected at New Orleans, Louisiana.
1936-1937	Bernard W. Kearny* Elected at Denver, Colorado.
1937-1938	Scott P. Squyres* Elected at Buffalo, New York.
1938-1939	Eugene I. Van Antwerp* Elected at Columbus, Ohio.
1939-1940	Otis N. Brown* Elected at Boston, Massachusetts.

1940-1941	Joseph C. Menendez*	Elected at Los Angeles, California.
1941-1942	Max Singer*	Elected at Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.
1942-1943	Robert T. Merrill*	Elected at Cincinnati, Ohio.
1943-1944	Carl S. Schoeninger*	Elected at New York, New York.
1944-1945	Jean A. Brunner*	Elected at Chicago, Illinois.
1945-1946	Joseph M. Stack*	Elected at Chicago, Illinois.
1946-1947	Louis E. Starr*	Elected at Boston, Massachusetts.
1947-1948	Ray H. Brannaman*	Elected at Cleveland, Ohio.
1948-1949	Lyll T. Beggs *	Elected at St. Louis, Missouri.
1949-1950	Clyde A. Lewis*	Elected at Miami, Florida.
1950-1951	Charles C. Ralls*	Elected at Chicago, Illinois.
1951-1952	Frank C. Hilton*	Elected at New York, New York.
1952-1953	James W. Cothran*	Elected at Los Angeles, California.
1953-1954	Wayne E. Richards*	Elected at Milwaukee, Wisconsin.
1954-1955	Merton B. Tice*	Elected at Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.
1955-1956	Timothy J. Murphy*	Elected at Boston, Massachusetts.
1956-1957	Cooper T. Holt*	Elected at Dallas, Texas.
1957-1958	Richard L. Roudebush*	Elected at Miami Beach, Florida.
1958-1959	John W. Mahan*	Elected at New York, New York.
1959-1960	Louis G. Feldmann*	Elected at Los Angeles, California.
1960-1961	T.C. Connell*	Elected at Detroit, Michigan.
1961-1962	Robert E. Hansen	Elected at Miami Beach, Florida.
1962-1963	Byron B. Gentry*	Elected at Minneapolis, Minnesota.
1963-1964	Joseph J. Lombardo*	Elected at Seattle, Washington.
1964-1965	John A. Jenkins*	Elected at Cleveland, Ohio.
1965-1966	Andy Borg*	Elected at Chicago, Illinois.
1966-1967	Leslie M. Fry*	Elected at New York, New York.
1967-1968	Joseph A. Scerra*	Elected at New Orleans, Louisiana.
1968-1969	Richard W. Homan*	Elected at Detroit, Michigan.
1969-1970	Raymond A. Gallagher*	Elected at Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.
1970-1971	Herbert R. Rainwater*	Elected at Miami Beach, Florida.
1971-1972	Joseph L. Vicites*	Elected at Dallas, Texas.
1972-1973	Patrick E. Carr*	Elected at Minneapolis, Minnesota.
1973-1974	Ray R. Soden	Elected at New Orleans, Louisiana.
1974-1975	John J. Stang	Elected at Chicago, Illinois.
1975-1976	Thomas C. Walker*	Elected at Los Angeles, California.
1976-1977	R. D. Smith Jr.	Elected at New York, New York.
1977-1978	Dr. John Wasyluk	Elected at Minneapolis, Minnesota.
1978-1979	Eric Sandstrom*	Elected at Dallas, Texas.
1979-1980	Howard E. Vander Clute Jr.*	Elected at New Orleans, Louisiana.
1980-1981	T. C. Selman*	Elected at Chicago, Illinois.

1980-1981	Arthur Fellwock	Succeeded T.C. Selman, Oct. 21, 1980.
1980-1981	Arthur Fellwock	Elected at Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.
1982-1983	James R. Currieo.....	Elected at Los Angeles, California.
1983-1984	Clifford G. Olson Jr.....	Elected at New Orleans, Louisiana.
1984-1985	Billy Ray Cameron.....	Elected at Chicago, Illinois.
1985-1986	John S. Staum	Elected at Dallas, Texas.
1986-1987	Norman G. Staab.....	Elected at Minneapolis, Minnesota.
1987-1988	Earl L. Stock*	Elected at New Orleans, Louisiana.
1988-1989	Larry W. Rivers	Elected at Chicago, Illinois.
1989-1990	Walter G. Hogan	Elected at Las Vegas, Nevada.
1990-1991	James L. Kimery*	Elected at Baltimore, Maryland.
1991-1992	Robert E. Wallace	Elected at New Orleans, Louisiana.
1992-1993	John M. Carney	Elected at Indianapolis, Indiana.
1993-1994	George R. Cramer.....	Elected at Dallas, Texas.
1994-1995	Allen F. "Gunner" Kent	Elected at Las Vegas, Nevada.
1995-1996	Paul A. Spera	Elected at Phoenix, Arizona.
1996-1997	James E. Nier	Elected at Louisville, Kentucky.
1997-1998	John E. Moon.....	Elected at Salt Lake City, Utah.
1998-1999	Thomas A. Pouliot	Elected at San Antonio, Texas.
1999-2000	John W. Smart.....	Elected at Kansas City, Missouri.
2000-2001	John F. Gwizdak	Elected at Milwaukee, Wisconsin.
2001-2002	James N. Goldsmith*	Elected at Milwaukee, Wisconsin.
2002-2003	Raymond C. Sisk*	Elected at Nashville, Tennessee.
2003-2004	Edward S. Banas, Sr.	Elected at San Antonio, Texas.
2004-2005	John Furgess	Elected at Cincinnati, Ohio.
2005-2006	James R. Mueller	Elected at Salt Lake City, Utah.
2006-2007	Gary L. Kurpius	Elected at Reno, Nevada.
2007-2008	George J. Lisicki	Elected at Kansas City, Missouri.
2008-2009	Glen M. Gardner, Jr.	Elected at Orlando, Florida.
2009-2010	Thomas J. Tradewell, Sr.	Elected at Phoenix, Arizona.
2010-2011	Richard L. Eubank	Elected at Indianapolis, Indiana.

VFW National Officers and Directors, 2011-2012

Commander-in-Chief.....	Richard L. DeNoyer
Senior Vice Commander-in-Chief.....	John E. Hamilton
Junior Vice Commander-in-Chief	William A. Thien
Adjutant General	Allen F. "Gunner" Kent
Quartermaster General	Lawrence M. Maher
Judge Advocate General	Matthew "Fritz" Mihelcic

Surgeon General.....	Curtis O. "Doc" Bohlman, M.D.
National Chaplain	Rev. John J. Holland
National Chief of Staff	Walter Gansenberg
Inspector General	John A. Biedrzycki, Jr.
Assistant Adjutant General & Executive Director, Washington Office.....	Robert E. Wallace
Assistant Adjutant General, Operations.....	John J. McNeill
Assistant Quartermaster General.....	Robert B. Greene
Director, Administration & Operations, Washington Office.....	Fredrick W. Burns
Director, Administrative Operations.....	Kevin C. Jones
Director, Communications & Public Affairs, Kansas City.....	Jerry L. Newberry
Director, Communications & Public Affairs, Washington	Joseph E. Davis
Director, Human Resources	Debra L. Anderson
Director, Information Technology/CIO	Patrick J. Botbyl
Director, Member Dues Processing.....	Robert A. Crider
Director, Membership.....	Matthew C. Claussen
Director, National Military Services	Michael G. Penney
Director, National Veterans Service.....	William L. Bradshaw
Deputy Director, National Veterans Service	Gerald T. Manar
Director, Programs.....	Stephen L. Van Buskirk
Director, Properties.....	Billy R. Weissend
Director, Publications and Editor-in-Chief, VFW magazine	Richard K. Kolb
Director, VFW Foundation	John G. Lowe

Regional National Council of Administration Members, 2011-2012

District No. 1 (ME NH).....	Thomas R. Lussier
District No. 2 (MA VT).....	Vito S. DeMarco
District No. 3 (MD NJ).....	Otto A. Gollon
District No. 4 (DC DE EU)	Charlie W. Smith
District No. 5 (IN MO).....	Richard M. Faulk
District No. 6 (VA WV)	Harold J. Roesch
District No. 7 (KY TN).....	John H. Scott
District No. 8 (AL GA)	Dean E. Smith
District No. 9 (NC SC)	Francis M. Fogner
District No.10 (AR OK).....	Robert A. Clark
District No.11 (IA WI).....	Allen W. Kochenderfer
District No.12 (ND WY)	Gary K. Mathisen
District No.13 (CO KS)	Ronald J. Lattin
District No.14 (ID MT WA).....	George C. Berthiaume

District No.15	(AZ NM)	Raymond K. Thomas
District No.16	(AK HI LAT PAC)	George F. Barlett
District No.17	(NV OR UT)	H. Merle Jackson
District No.18	(CT RI)	Stanley W. Borusiewicz, Jr.
District No.19	(LA MS)	A. Wayne Aldridge
District No. 21	(MN NE)	Dan G. Petersen
District No. 23	(MI SD)	Russel L. Dramstad
District A	(PA)	Robert C. Eiler
District B	(IL)	Jules D. Spindler
District C	(NY)	Ronald J. Bush
District D	(OH)	Roger A. Frye
District G	(CA)	Jack E. Turner
District H	(TX)	Eliseo "Al" Cantu, Jr.
District J	(FL)	Allen E. Hall
Past Commander-in-Chief		Richard L. Eubank

National Honor Guard

	POST
Ronald E. Servary, Captain	521 MD
Alfred N. Simmons, Adjutant Quartermaster	8509 MD
Eugene Daisey	5118 MD
Barbara Floyd	521 MD
Raymond H. Glock	1858 MD
Thomas V. Kimball	10159 MD
Neil William Koski	6694 MD
Gary Lee	3859 MD
Charles P. McConville	521 MD
Michael McGuire	8849 MD
Phillip S. Medlin, Sr.	2678 MD
Stephen J. Olcott	9619 MD
Robert J. Patterson	6027 MD
Henry E. Servary	521 MD
Clinton A. Slack	475 DE
James L. Youngblood	9083 MD

**National Convention Committee
August 28- September 1, 2012, San Antonio, Texas**

Convention Committee Chairman	Glen M. Gardner, Jr.
Operations Officer.....	Ted Blouin
Health Fair Chairman	Sylvia Sanchez
Meeting Halls, Signs & Flags Co-Chairman.....	Lewie Cooper
Meeting Halls, Signs & Flags Co-Chairman.....	Fidel G. Gomez
Assistant Adjutant General Administration Operations.....	John McNeill
Manager, Meetings & Events.....	Vanessa Kane, CMP, CMM
Memorial Service Chairman	Robert Dickerson
Patriotic Rally Chairman	Joe McCullough
Registration Chairman	Edward Torres
Transportation Chairman	Tashawnya McCullough
Military Contests Chairman	MSG Michael Garza

National Honor Guard

	POST
Ronald Servary, Captain.....	521 MD
Eugene Daisey	5118 MD
Barbara Floyd	521 MD
Raymond Glock	1858 MD
Gary Lee	609 VA
Stephen Olcott	9619 MD
Henry Servary	521 MD
Clinton Slack	475 DE
Edward Smith	838 DE

National Sergeant-at-Arms

	POST
Bryan P. O'Brien.....	2394 MA

National Assistant Sergeants-at-Arms

Joy Ausman	10043 ID
Gary W. Barringer.....	9134 NC
James M. Galen.....	6802 MI
Lonnie Garza.....	7110 TX
George Lott	10152 NJ
Keith MacDonald	2275 CA
Joseph P. Schirmers.....	4847 MN
Joseph P. Schirmers.....	4847 MN



Richard L. DeNoyer
Commander-in-Chief
2011-2012



John E. Hamilton
Commander-in-Chief
2012-2013

VFW National Officers and Directors, 2012-2013

Commander-in-Chief.....	John E. Hamilton
Senior Vice Commander-in-Chief.....	William A. Thien
Junior Vice Commander-in-Chief	John W. Stroud
Adjutant General	Allen F. "Gunner" Kent
Quartermaster General	Robert B. Greene
Judge Advocate General	David B. Norris
Surgeon General.....	Dr. James R. "Doc" Tuorila
National Chaplain	Rev. William J. Bleiler
National Chief of Staff	William R. Kirsop
Inspector General.....	Carl J. Kaelin
Assistant Adjutant General & Executive Director, Washington Office	Robert E. Wallace
Assistant Adjutant General, Operations.....	John J. McNeill
Director, Administration & Operations, Washington Office.....	Fredrick W. Burns
Director, Administrative Operations.....	Kevin C. Jones
Director, Communications & Public Affairs, Kansas City.....	Jerry L. Newberry
Director, Communications & Public Affairs, Washington	Joseph E. Davis
Director, Human Resources.....	Debra L. Anderson
Director, Membership.....	Robert A. Crider
Director, National Military Services	Michael G. Penney
Director, National Veterans Service.....	William L. Bradshaw
Deputy Director, National Veterans Service	Gerald T. Manar
Director, Operations for the Quartermaster General	Patrick J. Botbyl
Director, Programs.....	Stephen L. Van Buskirk
Director, Properties.....	Billy R. Weissend
Director, Publications and Editor-in-Chief, VFW magazine	Richard K. Kolb
Director, VFW Foundation	John G. Lowe

Regional National Council of Administration Members, 2012-2013

Department of Alabama	George Jones
Department of Alaska	Robert Myles
Department of Arizona	Timothy Borland
Department of Arkansas	Michael Nuckolls
Department of California	Bobby Price
Department of Colorado.....	Ronald Lattin
Department of Connecticut	Stanley Borusiewicz
Department of Delaware	John Morrow
Department of District of Columbia.....	Herman Salley
Department of Europe	Peter Mascetti

Department of Florida	Allen Hall
Department of Georgia.....	Dean Smith
Department of Hawaii	Norbert Enos
Department of Idaho	John Crotinger
Department of Illinois.....	Jules Spindler
Department of Indiana.....	Richard Faulk
Department of Iowa.....	Darrell Blasberg
Department of Kansas.....	J. T. Plummer
Department of Kentucky	Brian Duffy
Department of Latin America/Carib	Jose Claudio
Department of Louisiana	Federico Arends
Department of Maine	Thomas Lussier
Department of Maryland	Jack Lewis
Department of Massachusetts	Roland Gendron
Department of Michigan.....	Jack Pray
Department of Minnesota	Donald Nix
Department of Mississippi	Wayne Aldridge
Department of Missouri	David Morgan
Department of Montana	Timothy Peters
Department of Nebraska.....	Dan Petersen
Department of Nevada	Herman Hagen
Department of New Hampshire.....	David Ouellette
Department of New Jersey.....	Otto Gollon
Department of New Mexico	Allan Kuchinsky
Department of New York	Ronald Bush
Department of North Carolina.....	James Goins
Department of North Dakota	Dale Ronning
Department of Ohio	Richard Uzl
Department of Oklahoma.....	Harlan Bjorgo
Department of Oregon	Bert Key
Department of Pacific Areas.....	Gerald Kraus
Department of Pennsylvania	Robert Eiler
Department of Rhode Island.....	Allen Wagonblott
Department of South Carolina	Frank Fogner
Department of South Dakota	Russel Dramstad
Department of Tennessee.....	John Scott
Department of Texas	Dennis Barber
Department of Utah.....	Brent Neilsen
Department of Vermont.....	Malcolm MacAskill
Department of Virginia.....	James Martin

Department of Washington	Jerry Herker
Department of West Virginia	Charles Haney
Department of Wisconsin	Allen Kochenderfer
Department of Wyoming	James Pedersen
Past Commander-in-Chief	Richard L. DeNoyer

National Convention Committee
July 21 - 24, 2012, Reno, Nevada

Convention Committee Chairman	Jack McMIndes
Operations Officer.....	Michael Musgrove
Health Fair Chairman	William Maltman
Meeting Halls, Signs & Flags Co-Chairman.....	Lewie Cooper
Meeting Halls, Signs & Flags Co-Chairman.....	Bernard Juran
Assistant Adjutant General, Administration Operations	John McNeill
Manager, Meetings & Events	Vanessa Kane, CMP, CMM
Memorial Service Chairman	Gilbert Hernandez
Patriotic Rally Chairman	Herman Hagen
Registration Chairman	Stephen Gibbs
Transportation Chairman	Jerry Chamlee
Military Contests Chairman	Rick Isom

National Honor Guard

	POST
Ronald Servary, Captain.....	521 MD
Eugene Daisey.....	5118 MD
Barbara Floyd.....	521 MD
Raymond Glock.....	1858 MD
Gary Lee.....	609 VA
Stephen Olcott	9619 MD
Henry Servary.....	521 MD
Clinton Slack	475 DE
Edward Smith	838 DE

National Sergeant-at-Arms

Bryan P. O'Brien.....	2394 MA
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National Assistant Sergeants-at-Arms

Joy Ausman	10043 ID
Gary W. Barringer.....	9134 NC
Lonnie Garza.....	7110 TX
George Lott	10152 NJ
Keith MacDonald	2275 CA
Joseph P. Schirmers.....	4847 MN

SUMMARY OF PROCEEDINGS OF THE 113th NATIONAL
CONVENTION OF THE VETERANS OF FOREIGN WARS
OF THE UNITED STATES

RENO, NEVADA, JULY 22–25, 2012

ANNUAL MEMORIAL SERVICE
SUNDAY, JULY 22, 2012

(The Memorial Service of the 113th Annual Convention of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, held in the Reno Sparks Convention Center, Reno, Nevada, was called to order at 8:30 o'clock a.m., with Commander-in-Chief Richard L. DeNoyer presiding.)

CALL TO ORDER

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF DeNOYER: Sergeants-at-Arms, will you be so kind to escort the Gold Star Families and Past National Chaplains to the reserved seats.

SERGEANT-AT-ARMS BRIAN O'BRIEN: Yes, sir, Commander-in-Chief. National Assistant Sergeant-at-Arms, escort in our Past Chaplains and our Gold Star Families and Gold Star Mothers. Comrades, Sisters and Friends, please rise as we escort in our honored guests and please no applause. Thank you.

(Whereupon, the Assistant Sergeants-at-Arms escorted the Gold Star Families, Honored Guests and National Past Chaplains into the hall at this time.)

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF DeNOYER: Sergeant-at-Arms, you will prepare the hall for the Advancement and Posting of the Colors, followed by the Pledge of Allegiance and the National Anthem.

SERGEANT-AT-ARMS O'BRIEN: Yes, sir, Commander-in-Chief. Captain of the Veterans of Foreign Wars National Honor Guard, advance, post and salute the Flag of the United States of America.

ADVANCE OF COLORS

(Whereupon, the VFW National Honor Guard Advanced, Posted and Saluted the Flag of the United States of America.)

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

SERGEANT-AT-ARMS O'BRIEN: Comrades, Sisters and Friends, please join me in the Pledge of Allegiance to the United States Flag followed by our National Anthem, and then the Posting of the Colors.

(Whereupon, the Assembly gave the Pledge of Allegiance, followed by the National Anthem sung by Juanita Bohlman, National Soloist, Ladies Auxiliary, and the Posting of the Colors.)

SERGEANT-AT-ARMS O'BRIEN: Please remain standing for the Invocation by Chaplain Todd V. Brown, 422nd Expeditionary Signal Battalion.

INVOCATION

CHAPLAIN BROWN: Please join me in prayer. Let us pray. Dear Heavenly Father, we come before you this morning and thank you for the opportunity we have to stand before you as friends, family, and we stand in awe and wonder of your majesty.

Lord, I ask this morning that you will give those who speak your power, your peace that your words will penetrate their mouth and we would open our hearts to your words we have this morning. For those who could not be with us today, we ask that you bless them and bless their families.

Once again, Lord, we thank you as it says "One Nation under God." We thank you for the hard work efforts and energy that those who are in harm's way right now are doing.

We thank you for the hard work, effort, of the perilous efforts of those in the past that have given that we can stand here today free and safe. It is in Jesus' name that I pray. Amen.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF DeNOYER: Please be seated. Sergeant-at-Arms, retire the Color Guard.

SERGEANT-AT-ARMS O'BRIEN: The opening ceremonies of the Memorial Service have been completed and your orders have been obeyed, sir.

IN MEMORIAM – JOHN W. MAHAN

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF DeNOYER: Sadly, John W. Mahan, one of the VFW's great Commanders-in-Chief, passed away on July 4, 2012. As indicated in the program, John was Commander-in-Chief from 1958-1959. Please remember him in your prayers.

MEMORIAL RITUAL

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF EUBANK: Comrades, Ladies of the Auxiliary and friends, we have met at this time to commemorate our comrades of the United States Armed Forces who have answered the final call. The VFW Ritual provides that the audience shall refrain from applauding. The Chief of Staff will see there is no disturbance during the ceremonies.

NATIONAL CHIEF OF STAFF WALTER GANSENBURG: Commander-in-Chief, your order will be obeyed.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF DeNOYER: I will request that the National Chaplain preside.

NATIONAL CHAPLAIN JOHN HOLLAND: Comrade Commander-in-Chief, I am at your service and shall endeavor to humbly perform this solemn duty in the spirit of faith, hope and charity.

We now have the lighting of the POW-MIA Candle, and the Armed Forces Vigil Candle by the Commander-in-Chief and the National President of our Ladies Auxiliary. Let us pray.

O God Almighty, Creator and Ruler of the Universe, some of our comrades and companions are Prisoners of War and Missing in Action. Comfort them, we pray, in their isolation from their homes and their loved ones; supply their needs and protect them from want and deprivation;

strengthen and sustain them that they may face discouragement with courage and hardship with resolution. Grant that they may find patience to endure, and peace in the knowledge of Your continuing presence.

O God, we ask that You will strengthen and protect all our members of the armed forces of the United States of America. In the day of battle, may they be courageous and strong, resourceful and capable, resolute and victorious. In the time of peace, may they serve with dignity and honor, as effective emissaries of goodwill for this Nation.

May their devotion and loyalty to You, to their homeland, inspire them in moments of challenge. Comfort them in tribulation and long separations from their loved ones. And finally, we ask that they may return safely to serve you and our Country in the days and years to come. Amen.

Comrade Commander-in-Chief, to whom should the true soldier look for help in the battles of life?

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF DeNOYER: "Our help is in the name of the Lord who made heaven and earth."

NATIONAL CHAPLAIN HOLLAND: Comrade Senior Vice Commander-in-Chief, what assurance have we of a prolonged stay among the scenes and activities of earth?

SENIOR VICE COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF JOHN HAMILTON: "For we are strangers before Thee, and sojourners, as with all our fathers; our days on earth are a shadow, and there is none abiding."

NATIONAL CHAPLAIN HOLLAND: Comrade Junior Vice Commander-in-Chief, have you a message of condolence for those bereaved?

JUNIOR VICE COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF BILL THIEN: I have.

The Book of Life tells us that, "Like a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear Him. For He knowest our frame; He remembereth that we are dust."

NATIONAL CHAPLAIN HOLLAND: What message has the Chaplain of the Ladies Auxiliary?

LADIES AUXILIARY CHAPLAIN ANN PANTELEAKOS: I have a message of hope that should inspire our comrades at this solemn moment and all through life. The message is from the Captain of our Salvation. He said, "I am the resurrection and the life; he that believeth in Me, though he were dead, yet shall he live; and whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die."

NATIONAL CHAPLAIN HOLLAND: Comrades, we are thankful for these inspiring thoughts. Let us learn the lesson of the hour which is that we, too, are nearing the end of life's pilgrimage and sooner or later these services may be held in our memory.

Let us so live that when our summons comes, we may depart with a good conscience, in the comfort of a sincere religion, belief in God and perfect charity toward all mankind. Let us pray.

We come today to honor the memory of those friends and comrades that have offered their service and their lives to our God and our Nation's cause. Proudly we remember their service. Because of their efforts, we live in a land of peace, freedom and justice. May this ceremony deepen our reverence.

We believe that our compatriots, now in the hands of our Heavenly Father, are judge of us all. Let us pledge ourselves anew and provide support and protection to those that they have left behind. Let us pick up their banner and march to face the challenges that confront us all in this

life.

Almighty God, Father of us all, in the midst of those here assembled, we seek your hand of mercy in the depth of our sorrow for our departed brothers and sisters. As our ranks grow thinner, help us to be faithful to Thee and one another.

Heavenly Father, bless our nation with freedom, peace and righteousness. Through your sovereign favor, may we meet at last before the throne of grace in heaven, and to your great name shall there be praise forever and ever. Amen.

I will now ask Juanita Bohlman, National Soloist for the Ladies Auxiliary, to sing "Sleep Soldier Boy."

(Whereupon, Ladies Auxiliary National Soloist Juanita Bohlman sang at this time "Sleep Soldier Boy.")

SYMBOLIC TRIBUTE

NATIONAL CHAPLAIN HOLLAND: Comrades, in commemorating the virtues of our departed heroes, who served their country in time of need, we now offer our symbolic tributes.

I place upon our sacred shrine these red flowers, which symbolize the great zeal of our departed comrades in upholding brotherhood, truth and justice.

Comrade Past Commander-in-Chief, what tribute have you to offer?

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF RICHARD EUBANK: These white flowers I place as a token of the purity of affection we have for our departed comrades.

NATIONAL CHAPLAIN HOLLAND: Commander-in-Chief, have you a tribute to place upon the sacred shrine?

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF DeNOYER: The blue of our national standard symbolizes truth and fidelity. Therefore, I place these blue flowers from nature's bosom in token of our sincere respect for all of our departed comrades.

NATIONAL CHAPLAIN HOLLAND: Ladies of the Auxiliary, will you offer a tribute to the memory of our departed comrades?

LADIES AUXILIARY NATIONAL PRESIDENT GWEN RANKIN: I place upon our sacred shrine this wreath as a symbol of eternity. Its color bespeaks of life everlasting. Thus, do we say that the deeds of our soldiers, sailors, airmen and marines, on land, on sea and in the air, are immortalized in the hearts of grateful people.

NATIONAL CHAPLAIN HOLLAND: Now, Juanita Bohlman will sing "I Won't Let Go."

(Whereupon, Ladies Auxiliary National Soloist Juanita Bohlman sang at this time "I Won't Let Go.")

MEMORIAL ADDRESS

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF DeNOYER: Patrick Stepanek, is Pastor of the Spring Creek Baptist Church in Spring Creek, Nevada. He is a volunteer director of the Salvation Army in Elko, Nevada. He is an active member of VFW Post 2350 in Elko, and especially in ceremonies for deceased veterans. Pat is also a Life Member of the Disabled American Veterans.

He was born and raised in Omaha, Nebraska, and he graduated with

two degrees from Grace University in 1981 and 1983. Pastor Stepanek also graduated from Talbot Seminary, Los Angeles County in 1987 with a Master's of Divinity.

He served as a supply sergeant, and then as a Chaplain in the army for 19 years. He was chaplain and pastor of the 137th Armored Regiment of the Second Brigade, First Armored Division in Baghdad in 2003, and is a disabled American veteran. Pat also has served with the units of the 5th Infantry, Second Armored, 101st Airborne Divisions while on active duty.

He is married to the former Eugenia Landers, and they have three sons: Benjamin, who is currently in the Air Force and is stationed at Peterson Air Force Base in Colorado; Joshua, who also served in Baghdad in 2010 to 2011 with the Idaho National Guard; and David, who served in the Navy.

Chaplain Pat's hobbies include reading, family time, walks with his wife and golf. He has been known to listen to Christmas music all through the year.

It gives me great pleasure to introduce to you Pastor Pat J. Stepanek.

PASTOR STEPANEK: I wish to thank the many people who made this possible today, especially those in the VFW who work behind the scenes, you never see them, but they make things happen. Also, the leadership, both elected and appointed, they give us the impetus and direction that we can do so much as a union of veterans, to help our veterans. I want to thank the men and women veterans and families that are here today to remember those Gold Star families. My prayers are with you every day. We come here to honor, remember and to live for those folks.

We must remember that America is a nation of citizenship soldiers from all possible backgrounds. They have answered the call of our nation voluntarily and at other times with a special invitation from our uncle. These include Johnny Carson, Alan Alda, Bill Cosby, Humphrey Bogart, Elvis Presley, Clint Eastwood, who went on to be entertainers.

We must also remember Roger Marciano, Leon Spinks, Jackie Robinson, Roberto Clemente, Ted Williams, Yogi Berra, and Roger Staubach, who went on to be great athletes. We also had Andy Anderson, Chuck Sanders, Lou Capo, Jerry Franco and Larry Hyers. And remember Gil Hernandez and Mike Musgrove who went to Elko, Nevada, and impacted the community there, just as many of you impact you communities and cities you live in every day of your life.

In the 2010 census, we found there are 21.8 million veterans that come from various state backgrounds and ethnic groups, all socioeconomic groups. As I have grown older, I believe I have gotten smarter, although my wife often disagrees with that. But I have learned to pay greater attention to history.

Don't get me wrong, I always loved history. I would take my history book home in grade school and read it within a week or two of the issue of that book. But my love for history intensified when my friend, John, walked up to me in 1972. John said, "Is your dad Edward Louis Stepanek?" I said, "Yes." "Did he serve in the Korean War?" "Yes." "Was he in the back of a deuce and a half, he was wounded when he pulled another man out that was in the back of the deuce?" He said, "Your father saved my dad."

My love of history became much more personal and intimate to think that in 1952 two men served together in Korea and the boys would meet each other in Omaha, Nebraska, in a skating rink. It is a small nation after all, folks.

I watched my dad impact people. He had a heart to help. I realize there are many veterans all around me, mechanics, ministers, doctors, plumbers, and teachers. I believe they are still serving the nation in the jobs they did.

As a Christian ritual, one tradition was to watch Charles Dickens' great story, "A Christmas Carol." In that story, we were introduced to Ebenezer Scrooge, who was a villain in the beginning and a hero in the end. Ebenezer means stone of help or stone of witness. We have many stones of witnesses all around us, statues and memorials to great people, great victories. Even national parks, places like Gettysburg and Vicksburg, remind us that they historically shaped our nation.

I want to challenge each of us in this hall to become Ebenezers. Years ago, I made a decision to be an Ebenezer in three groups.

The first was to my God and his church. He sent his son to die for me and make me free and give me hope and life.

The second is to my family, those who raised me, and my own children, that I would live in such a way that I honored them, supported them and did not embarrass them and become a shipwreck in life.

The third was my fellow veterans, those who blazed the paths before us, who served honorably in uniform and later came home and as citizens of our nation continued to serve; that I would seek to help those in need and encourage those I could, and not act in such a way to bring shame to my brothers and sisters in arms, that I would live with integrity and serving my community, by seeking to honor all veterans.

If you are like me, sometimes it is nice to have something to hang your hat on. The Army gives us leadership. They don't use all the letters, but it stands for loyalty, duty, respect, selfless service, honor, integrity, and personal courage. If you live a life like that, we will be stones of witnesses, honoring our fellow comrade veterans, those who died in service or died because of the injuries received. But also those who go on and live day by day honoring and living out their vows.

Today I want to challenge each of you to become living, breathing stones of witness of our comrades in arms. We must be examples of what this nation is all about: freedom and liberty, such as no other people have ever known. Let our lives be positive and be impactful on our communities, both our cities, our states and our nation. May our comrades, both living and dead, be honored and not be belittled in the minds of those who watch us. Might our communities see our examples and desire to be a better place to live in. Let us so live that we are examples of freedom and liberty every day, so that the youngsters coming up will take our place as we leave the scene.

Let us be men and women reminding our fellow citizens that our comrades are good because of remembrance, not just on Memorial Day and Veterans Day, but every day of the year. When you take this challenge to be Ebenezers, come along beside me, I have striven partly because of my two grandfathers, five uncles, my father, two brothers and now three sons who have fought to keep our freedom and our liberty not just for this year but for years to come.

My friend Lou, at the graveside, says words at the end of his little monologue, comrades, let us so live that when the keeper of the internal records shall have called our name for the last time that, those that we leave behind may say of us as we now say of this comrade, "Here lies the remains of a true-hearted comrade and a fullest-defender of this country."

Be an Ebenezer of our comrades with me, not just at some VFW function, but all day, every day, and we will be honoring to each of our friends and they will be honoring to us. I challenge you to make that commitment. Thank you.

NATIONAL CHAPLAIN HOLLAND: I have requested the National Soloist of the Ladies Auxiliary, Juanita Bohlman, to sing "Somewhere". This is for the mothers.

(Whereupon, National Ladies Auxiliary Soloist Juanita Bohlman sang "Somewhere" at this time.)

NATIONAL CHAPLAIN HOLLAND: Ladies and gentlemen, please stand for the benediction by Chaplain Charles J. Jamison, Department of Nevada Chaplain.

BENEDICTION

CHAPLAIN JAMISON: Please remain covered at this time and receive God's benediction for you. Rejoice, again I say rejoice, rejoice because God loves you and he loves all whom he calls unto himself and to his bosom.

Know that he will never leave you and he will always walk beside you. He will be there in all kinds of weather. So, lift up your heads towards heaven as if to see his very face and for that God will give you strength, courage and amazing grace. Go forth now in the peace of God and may his spirit be with you this day and forever more. Amen.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF DeNOYER: National Sergeant-at-Arms, please prepare the hall for Retiring of the Colors.

SERGEANT-AT-ARMS O'BRIEN: Yes, sir, Commander-in-Chief. National Color Guard, advance and receive the Flag of the United States of America. (Whereupon, the Retiring of the Colors was had at this time.)

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF DeNOYER: We would like to acknowledge and thank all of the participants who have contributed to make the program a success.

National Sergeant-at-Arms, please escort the Gold Star families, past National Chaplains and honored guests from the room.

SERGEANT-AT-ARMS O'BRIEN: Yes, sir, Commander-in-Chief. National Sergeants, escort our honored guests, the Gold Star families and Gold Star mothers, and the National Chaplains from the hall.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF DeNOYER: This concludes our Memorial Service. Thank you for your attendance.

(Whereupon, the Memorial Service was concluded at 9:20 o'clock a.m.)

JOINT OPENING SESSION
MONDAY, JULY 23, 2012

(The Joint Opening Session of the 113th National Convention of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States and the 99th National Convention of the Ladies Auxiliary held in the Reno Sparks Convention Center, Reno, Nevada, was called to order on Monday, July 23, 2012, at 8:00 o'clock a.m., by Adjutant General Allen "Gunner" Kent.)

CALL TO ORDER

ADJUTANT GENERAL KENT: Good morning, ladies and gentlemen. I am "Gunner" Kent, Adjutant General of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States. Welcome to the Joint Opening Session of the 113th VFW National Convention.

We want to thank our generous sponsors for helping to make this year's convention possible as they are identified on the large screen. Special appreciation goes to our primary supporters: Buffalo Wild Wings, General Motors, Burger King, B&B Medical Services, Dish Network, Hallmark Cards, Sport Clips, USAA and Vet Jobs.

With us this morning are representatives from the 2011-2012 Outstanding Community Service Posts. Please stand as a group and be recognized. (Applause)

This year, 238 Commanders have earned the right to be named All American. There are 22 Department Commanders, 31 District Commanders and 185 Post Commanders to be honored. And those in attendance today will be presented their awards later this morning.

Commanders, please stand so we can properly thank you for the excellent work you so well performed this past year. (Applause)

Now, please join me in welcoming this year's Convention Chairman, Jack McMIndes. (Applause)

WELCOME BY NATIONAL CONVENTION CHAIRMAN
JACK McMINDES

COMRADE JACK McMINDES (Department of Nevada): Welcome, comrades. I am so pleased to see you all again. I am delighted to be the Convention Chairman this year and to have the honor to welcome you all to my home state, the Silver State, the great state of Nevada. Our state motto is "All For Our Country" and that's why it is so fitting that the National Convention should be held here, because we know what it means to give our all for our great country.

Nevada and the City of Reno are extremely proud to host the 113th National Convention. We sincerely hope the time you spend with us this week is enjoyable and that as you leave here with a great sense of appreciation and pride for this wonderful organization.

Our conventions serve to reinforce your commitment to America's veterans and our military and bring new excitement to your work as a member of the VFW and its Ladies Auxiliary.

Now, please rise as we officially open the Convention with the Advancing of the Colors.

National Sergeant-at-Arms, you will prepare the room to Advance the Colors.

NATIONAL SERGEANT-AT-ARMS O'BRIEN: Yes, sir, Mr. Chairman.

ADVANCEMENT OF COLORS

(Whereupon, the National Honor Guard advanced and posted the colors at this time.)

INVOCATION

COMRADE JACK McMINDES (Department of Nevada): For this morning's Invocation, we will have the National Chaplain of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, John Holland. Please then remain standing as we recite the Pledge of Allegiance, led by the Sergeant-at-Arms, the National Anthem sung by Juanita Bohlman, the Ladies Auxiliary National Soloist, and for the posting of the Colors.

NATIONAL CHAPLAIN JOHN HOLLAND: Please bow our heads. O Sovereign Ruler of the Universe, who art the Lord of Hosts and God of Peace, without Thee our efforts are in vain.

Continue Thy blessings upon us and our families, we pray Thee, and guide us during our deliberations.

We beseech Thee, O God, to bless the dependents of our departed comrades, and to comfort all who gave their loved ones to our nation's cause.

Bless and strengthen the sick, the needy and the afflicted. Bless, we ask Thee, the widows and children in our National Home and help us to fulfill our duty toward them.

Continue Thy favor upon our order, and help us to practice the spirit of true comradeship, both in our Councils and with the world at large.

Enable us to better the community in which we live through our devotion to duty as citizens.

We now have a moment of silent prayer for our departed comrades, those missing in action and those held as prisoners of war.

These and all other necessary blessings, we ask of Thee, Mighty Ruler of the Universe. Amen.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

(Whereupon, National Sergeant-at-Arms O'Brien led the assembly in the Pledge of Allegiance, followed by the National Anthem sung by Juanita Bohlman, Ladies Auxiliary National Soloist, and the posting of the Colors.)

NATIONAL SERGEANT-AT-ARMS O'BRIEN: The opening of the 113th National Convention has been completed, and your orders have been obeyed, sir.

VIDEO PRESENTATION

COMRADE JACK McMINDES (Department of Nevada): Thank you. Please direct your attention to the monitors for a video of the Commander-in-Chief's year.

(Whereupon, a video presentation on Commander-in-Chief DeNoyer's year was played at this time.)

INTRODUCTION OF COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF DeNOYER AND PRESENTATION OF THE OFFICIAL CONVENTION BADGE

COMRADE JACK McMINDES (Department of Nevada): It is now my pleasure to introduce a great man who has served veterans for many years, as well as this organization in a multitude of responsibilities, and is now our Commander-in-Chief.

Richard L. DeNoyer was elected Commander-in-Chief of the Veterans of Foreign Wars on September 1, 2011, at the VFW 112th National Convention, held in San Antonio, Texas.

Mr. DeNoyer served in the U.S. Marine Corps from 1960-1982, including a tour in Vietnam, July 1966-July 1967. He was attached to Ammunition Company, Force Logistics Support Group "A," 3rd Marine Division. His decorations include the Combat Action Ribbon, Vietnam Service Medal, Vietnam Cross of Gallantry with Palm and Drill Instructor Ribbon. During his Marine Corps career, he received a Bachelor's Degree from Bridgewater State College.

Mr. DeNoyer joined the VFW in 1981 at Post 1012 in Medford, Massachusetts, where he maintains his Life Membership. He has served in elected and appointed positions at the Post, District and Department levels culminating with his election as Department Commander in 2000-2001. He also has served on numerous National Committees and as Chairman of the Eastern States Conference.

After his military retirement, Mr. DeNoyer initially served as a National Service Officer for the American Veterans of World War II organization. In 1988, Mr. DeNoyer began working for Paralyzed Veterans of America as a National Service Officer, Senior Benefit Advocate and National Field Director, as well as supervising the Boston office and nine offices in the Northeast.

Mr. DeNoyer is a member of the American Legion, Disabled American Veterans, Marine Corps Association, Marine Corps Mustang Association, Marine Corps League, U.S. Marine Corps Drill Instructors Association, Military Officers Association of America and the Masons League, and the Military Order of the Cootie.

Richard and his wife Theresa have two children and six grandchildren. They make their home in Middleton, Massachusetts.

Please welcome our Commander-in-Chief Richard DeNoyer.

(Whereupon, the assembly extended a prolonged standing ovation.)

REMARKS - COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF DeNOYER

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF DeNOYER: Before I get started, I would like for all of us to take a moment to acknowledge the wonderful men and women serving in our armed forces. I want to thank each of them and their families publicly for the silent sacrifices they make for our nation.

It is only because of such selfless devotion to duty and their courage that we are able to live in freedom.

I encourage each of you to reflect upon all the freedoms that we enjoy today and think about the intrepid and courageous service and sacrifice of all the men and women of our armed forces, who for more than 200 years have provided our nation with the security necessary to build upon those freedoms.

As all of you know, the Veterans of Foreign Wars is deeply involved in supporting our service members and their families through our benevolent programs that are dedicated specifically to their needs. I am proud of what we have been able to do on their behalf. Time and time again, over the past year, members have provided assistance to those who needed it most, and certainly to those who deserved it most.

There is not enough time to thank each of you personally, but you should know that I owe deep gratitude to all who encouraged me, allowed me to succeed, served as role models and inspired me, those who welcomed and befriended me, those who reminded me of my purpose as VFW Commander-in-Chief. I am proud to call all of you part of my family.

As evidenced by the video we just watched a few moments ago, there is no limit to what we can accomplish together. All of the highlights from this past year cannot be attributed to any one person in this room. Our accomplishments as an organization are a direct result of our concerted efforts as members of this great organization, by those who have experienced the brunt of battle firsthand and all those who have supported them.

It is true that there are no bonds stronger than of those who have been to war together and extended that unique and tried connection through the very same convictions that have formed the basis of the VFW.

I am very proud of what we have accomplished together in the past year, and it has been a genuine honor to have led such an honorable and selfless group of Americans as yourselves.

This leadership experience has taught me much, and will stay with me for the remainder of my life.

I am extremely fortunate, as a member of the VFW, to have had the distinctive honor to have been entrusted with your confidence. I have truly valued the responsibility you placed upon me and the level of accountability to which you have held me.

In a few days, I will pass the mantle of leadership on to our esteemed comrade, and my good friend, Senior Vice Commander John Hamilton. I am confident that under his leadership, the VFW will continue to succeed in its mission to fight for those who need us.

I have many people to thank for helping me to lead all of you in our success this year.

First and foremost, my wife Theresa, for her constant love and support; my children and grandchildren, who have made me so proud to be a father and grandfather; my brother-in-law, Lou Stifano, for recruiting me to the VFW 31 years ago; my Chief of Staff, Wally Gansenberg, for his advice, loyalty and support.

I would also like to thank my Adjutant General, Allen "Gunner" Kent, and his wife, Becky, for their loyalty and support in keeping Theresa and I on the correct path these past three years.

And the ladies in the Adjutant General's office, Betty, Diazzy and Mary Anne for keeping me on the straight and narrow during my tenure in the national chairs.

I thank Senior Vice Commander John Hamilton and Junior Vice Commander Bill Thien for their unwavering comradeship.

The 2011-2012 State Commanders for their tireless work on behalf of this great organization; Madam President Gwen Rankin and her Ladies

Auxiliary to the VFW for their many courtesies throughout the year, for all they have done for our great organization and for allowing me the privilege of addressing them at many of their meetings.

I thank Past Commanders-in-Chief Tommy Tradewell and Richard Eubank for their leadership and example. And finally, to all of the comrades and sisters in the Posts, Departments and Districts I have had the honor of visiting during my years in the chairs, to my department, the Department of Massachusetts, thank you for what you do for this organization. It has been a true honor to serve as your Commander-in-Chief.

I will continue to be an active member, even out of office, and will figure out different ways to serve this VFW in the years ahead.

The VFW has led our nation during a time of great consequence. Few organizations have faced more challenges. But when history is told, it will tell the story of a group of people who has never wavered from their principles, who kept our nation safe and who stepped forward to help when help was needed.

The need for the VFW and each one of its members will be its highest demand going forward. Recent budget cuts have placed our country's promise to care for her veterans in jeopardy.

Regrettably, even though our all-volunteer military has shouldered a multi-theater war all by themselves for over ten years, even as we meet some in Congress have proposed plans that would leave America's military and her veterans to shoulder more of the national debt.

I met with President Obama in March of this year and conveyed to him VFW's opposition to proposed changes in military retirement and imposed Tricare fees for active-duty military and retirees. And although the President has protected these programs thus far, we must remain vigilant in our watch for budget cuts that pose a threat to veterans' programs.

We must reverse VFW's 20-year continual loss in membership. I am sure you all have heard me say at some point or another throughout my tenure in the chairs, that I believe there is great power in numbers. The enduring strength of the VFW mission is highly dependent on the number of VFW and Auxiliary members and their desire to get involved when our service members and their families need us.

For this reason, the very reason for which the VFW was founded, we must continue to avidly reach out to our youngest veterans who have served in our country's longest war. Whether they realize it or not, at this point they are the ones who will need the VFW in the future.

It is an absolute necessity that we reach out to our returning women veterans and explain to them why they are valued within our organization. They will face a unique set of challenges in the future. And though VFW is already playing a vital role in women veterans' legislation and programs within the VA, their voice within the VFW will add even greater credibility to our demands from government to care for our female service members.

As my term in this administration ends and a new one begins, please know that I have the utmost confidence that VFW will continue to thrive in its quest to serve America's veterans and their families. I know this because I know all of you, your dedication, your selflessness, and your steadfast commitment to service has made us the nation's leading veterans service organization, a reputation that was hard earned and we, together, must never let it be tarnished.

I thank all of you for giving me the honor to serve as your National

Commander. And along with each of you, I wish our next Commander-in-Chief John Hamilton the best and every success.

Thank you for your kindness and generosity. Most of all, thank you for your friendship. God bless you, God bless America, and God bless all the men and women who serve so proudly today, and the families who support them. (Applause)

INTRODUCTION OF "NO ONE DOES MORE" VIDEO

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF DeNOYER: We have a new and resounding theme that ties together the many diverse programs and work the VFW does. I would like to take this opportunity to share with you VFW's new direction for the future.

(Whereupon, the "No One Does More" video is shown at this time.)

Your support and help in sharing this new and powerful message with others about who we are and what we do should certainly help the organization to not only survive, but to prosper and flourish as we have in the past. Always remember, no one does more for veterans.

PRESENTATION OF VFW GOLD MEDAL OF MERIT AND CITATION TO GWEN RANKIN, NATIONAL PRESIDENT OF THE LADIES AUXILIARY

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF DeNOYER: It is now my distinct pleasure to introduce my lovely counterpart, the National President of the Ladies Auxiliary to the Veterans of Foreign Wars.

Gwendolyn Rankin is a Life Member of Mission Santa Clara Auxiliary 3982 in Santa Clara, California. She is also a Life Member of the National Home for Children, and, indeed, a dedicated benefactor to more wonderful children.

Gwen has been actively involved in the organization since 1976, joining on the eligibility of her husband, Rick, who served in Vietnam. They enjoy time with their three children, three granddaughters and one grandson. Gwen recently retired after 20 years with Four-D Metal Finishing in Sunnyvale, California.

Since joining the Auxiliary, she has served as President for her Auxiliary, Santa Clara County Council and District 12. She was named Outstanding Department President in her Membership Group for the 2003-04 term.

On the National level, Gwen was named the Outstanding Conference Chairman serving as Western States Conference Chairman for the Membership Program in 2004-05 and was the 2005-06 Director for the Cancer Aid and Research Program. Delighted to be elected to the office of National Guard at the 2006 National Convention held here in Reno, she has continued her run through the National Chairs, culminating with her election as the Ladies Auxiliary National President at the 2011 National Convention in San Antonio.

I am very pleased to now present the VFW Gold Medal of Merit to my wonderful counterpart, a person of great integrity, National Ladies Auxiliary President, Gwen Rankin. (Applause)

ADJUTANT GENERAL KENT: "Gold Medal of Merit and Citation awarded to Gwen Rankin, National President of the Ladies Auxiliary of the Veterans of Foreign Wars, 2011-2012.

"In esteemed recognition and sincere appreciation of her loyal and

benevolent concern for America's veterans as the National President of the Ladies Auxiliary. Her theme, 'Step Up – Leave No Veteran Behind,' reflects her outstanding dedication and unique vision, and will forever serve as the true and honorable legacy of her presidency.

"Her wealth of experience and longtime commitment to the objectives of the VFW and Ladies Auxiliary, have justly earned her the highest level of admiration, respect, and gratitude of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States.

"In Witness Whereof, we have hereunto set our hands and the official seal of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, this 23rd day of July, 2012."

This has been signed by Richard L. DeNoyer, Commander-in-Chief, and Allen F. "Gunner" Kent, Adjutant General. (Applause)

RESPONSE – LADIES AUXILIARY PRESIDENT RANKIN

LADIES AUXILIARY PRESIDENT RANKIN: To Commander-in-Chief DeNoyer, National VFW and Ladies Auxiliary Officers, Past Commanders-in-Chief, Past National Presidents, Comrades, Sisters and all of our Guests:

Please know how very honored I am to receive this very special award from the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States of America bestowed upon me. I thank you most sincerely.

It is so humbling to accept this award, just as it has been humbling to represent my Auxiliary Sisters all year long and work with our VFW counterpart. Once again, the VFW and Ladies Auxiliary set high goals this year. To my Commander-in-Chief, Richard DeNoyer, and all the members of the VFW, bravo for a job well done. And to my Auxiliary Sisters, you make me very proud. (Applause)

Comrades and Sisters, next year we will celebrate the Ladies Auxiliary VFW's 100th National Convention. One hundred years! I can hardly believe it. There are few organizations who can boast that kind of service record and long-standing commitment.

Those 100 years have been for one cause: the veteran. We have existed alongside our comrades for 100 years because we have sent loved ones off to war, welcomed them home and mourned them. We will do this for another 100 years.

Just like the VFW, our organization is faced with challenges and decisions that affect our future as a veterans' service organization. I am here to tell you that the Ladies Auxiliary VFW is pressing forward to make sure that we are here to continue the work we have begun. Now, more than ever, we are going to put veterans and their families first.

My theme this year was "Step Up - Leave No Veteran Behind." My year may be drawing to a close, but this theme will resonate in my heart for the rest of my life. It is truly how I feel. Every man and woman who dons the uniform of our country in service deserves the respect, the care, and the honor that is due him or her. No veteran can be left behind. We owe it to each of them and we owe it to our country. They are our strength and bedrock. Our security rests in their hands. We can do no less for them as this is our calling; this is our commitment.

To every veteran here today: Thank you! Thank you for answering the call. Thank you for your sacrifices. Thank you for serving our country.

May God bless our service members and may God bless all of you as he

blessed the United States of America. (Applause)

INTRODUCTION OF THE HONORABLE BOB CASHELL,
MAYOR OF RENO, NEVADA, AND THE HONORABLE
GENO MARTINI, MAYOR OF SPARKS, NEVADA

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF DeNOYER: It brings me great pleasure to introduce our next guests, the Mayor of Reno, the Honorable Bob Cashell, and the Mayor of Sparks, the Honorable Geno Martini.

Mayor Cashell is truly a leader in his community as evidenced by this term in the Mayor's office. He was first elected to the Mayor's seat in 2002, then re-elected in 2006 and 2010.

He has experienced many accomplishments during his more than 30 years in public service and has helped to make Reno the vibrant, successful city it is today.

Sparks Mayor Geno Martini was elected Mayor Pro Tem by the City Council in July 2003, and served in that capacity until February 2005, when he was sworn in as Mayor. He was elected to a full term in 2006 and again in 2010.

Under Mayor Martini's tenure, the City of Sparks has flourished; experiencing growth in the retail business sector, and the city recently broke ground on a one billion dollar project known as "The Legends at Sparks Marina."

Please join me in welcoming the Mayor of "The Biggest Little City in the World," Bob Cashell, and Geno Martini, Mayor of "The City of Promise." (Applause)

GREETINGS FROM RENO MAYOR BOB CASHELL AND SPARKS
MAYOR GENO MARTINI

MAYOR CASHELL: I can't believe he was going to say all this about me.

MAYOR MARTINI: Most of it isn't the truth.

MAYOR CASHELL: Oh, cut it out. Ladies and gentlemen, it is a great honor to welcome you to the "Biggest Little City in the World." We have a lot of wonderful things we hope you will get out and see. We hope you will go to the Nevada Museum of Art, or go to the new Children's Museum we built, the National Automobile Museum. We have a lot of wonderful things, great restaurants, and we hope you have a wonderful time.

I would like to straighten out one thing. The Commander-in-Chief asked Mayor Martini and I to get in a kayak because we had built this new whitewater rafting course. Folks, I weigh 270. My friends, have you ever seen two fat asses like us in a kayak? You know, when I was in the Air Force Reserve, I was fortunate that nobody was shooting at each other. The only war I had was at Lackland Air Force Base with my sergeant.

For a long time, I thought my mother had forgotten to tell me my whole name. "Yo-Yo, Dummy," and I can't repeat some of them. But it is a great honor to be here and to be with you. And really, you know, Geno and I, and Geno is going to speak here as soon as I shut my mouth. You know, we would love to spend the whole day with you, but we have got two cities we have got to screw up, and it takes all the work we can.

I thought my sergeant had fallen in love with me when I came on the base one day, because he made me the latrine chief. I thought, man, he

gave me a crew. I have got six guys. Man, we will do it.

We had that bathroom so spotless until he brought his little dental mirror out and went over to the toilet and started checking under the lid. That cost me 100 push-ups.

But, anyway, welcome to the city, and I hope you have a wonderful time while you are here. (Applause)

MAYOR MARTINI: Thanks, Bob. I know in the past I should never let Bob go first, because I am now stuck. He has used all the jokes, and I have nothing much left to say. But, again, welcome to everybody and don't forget about the City of Sparks. It is joined by a common boundary line and it is a beautiful little city. It is a family city of about 92,000 people.

Go down to our Legends Shopping Center. It houses the largest all-sports sporting goods store in the world. It is 295,000 square feet of anything that you can imagine in sporting goods. It is called Shields All Sports. So, make sure you take a trip down there.

Have some fun while you are here. We have a wonderful city. Reno and Sparks is beautiful. We have, like Bob said, kayak parks and a lot of amenities that we hope you guys will take advantage of.

You know, I so appreciate what you folks do for veterans. One of the things that I regret that I never was able to do, I wasn't able to be in the armed services because of some physical problems. But it is one of the things that I wish I would have been able to do, because I am so proud of the people that serve in our armed forces, and I am so proud of you folks that take care and do things for the veterans. So, we appreciate that.

One thing I did want to say, Bob, step up here a minute, would you? Do you know us together what this represents? You have all heard it. This represents big government. (Laughter) So, again, thank you all for being here. Do your work and make sure you have some fun.

Again, God bless, God bless the veterans of the United States and the people that are serving us now, and above all, God bless the United States of America. (Applause)

PRESENTATION OF GOLD MEDAL AND CITATION TO MONTFORD POINT MARINE ASSOCIATION

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF DeNOYER: It is now my great pleasure to present the VFW Commander-in-Chief Gold Medal and Citation to the Montford Point Marines, represented here today by the National President of Montford Point Marine Association, Incorporated, Dr. James Averhart.

In 1941, as the United States was preparing for war, President Franklin D. Roosevelt issued Executive Order 8802, Prohibition of Discrimination in the Defense Industry, mandating that the military begin enlisting African-Americans.

During a time when discrimination and racism were daily realities, a pioneering group of brave young men eager to serve their country rushed to recruiting offices and soon after began basic training for the United States Marine Corps at Montford Point Camp, a small, segregated section of North Carolina's Camp Lejeune. The facility was underwhelming, but just as demanding as other marine training sites.

More than 20,000 black Marines trained at Montford Point. And each of these pioneering men proved through their performance both at home and abroad, despite the strictures placed on them by society, that they were

true Marines. Adding insurance to this claim, they broke every antiaircraft gunnery records that had been set by white Marines, with records that remain unbroken to this day.

The Montford Point Marines truly embody the Marine Corps motto of "Semper Fidelis." They paved the way for future generations, regardless of background, to serve in the finest military in the world, and each of us remain free today in large part due to their service.

Please welcome Dr. James Averhart, here to accept the VFW Commander-in-Chief Gold Medal of Merit and Citation Award on behalf of the Montford Point Marine Association. (Applause)

ADJUTANT GENERAL KENT: "Commander-in-Chief Gold Medal of Merit and Citation awarded to the Montford Point Marine Association.

"In esteemed recognition and sincere appreciation for the selfless and dedicated service of some 20,000 African-Americans recruited into the United States Marine Corps beginning in 1942 for service during World War II. Like the Buffalo Soldiers and Tuskegee Airmen, these courageous and intrepid Marines went on to demonstrate extraordinary courage under fire and fidelity to fellow Marines throughout the Pacific Theater.

"Their exemplary service, especially in the face of the racial challenges of that day, opened the door to countless men and women of all races who have continued to serve this nation with valor and pride.

"Therefore, the rich history and proud legacy of the Montford Point Marines is worthy of this organization's highest honor as well as the gratitude of all who benefited from their proud service during one of our nation's darkest hours.

"On this date, the more than 2.1 million members of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States and our Auxiliaries salute the Montford Point Marines.

"In Witness Whereof, we have hereunto set our hands and the official seal of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, this 23rd day of July, 2012."

This has been signed by Richard L. DeNoyer, Commander-in-Chief, and Allen "Gunner" Kent, Adjutant General. (Applause)

REMARKS BY DR. JAMES T. AVERHART, JR., NATIONAL PRESIDENT

DR. AVERHART: To the Commander-in-Chief DeNoyer, to all of the Board members and the national officers, to you, the Veterans of Foreign Wars members, thank you.

It is indeed an honor and a pleasure to have this opportunity to accept this award on behalf of the Montford Point Marines. Approximately, 20,000 African-Americans were trained at this segregated camp, known as Montford Point Camp. Approximately 70 years later, on June 27, Congress bestowed an honor upon the Montford Point Marines by receiving the Congressional Gold Medal.

It was a very emotional time for our organization, and the men of Montford Point. Approximately, 400 Montford Point Marines came to Washington, D.C., to receive that Congressional Gold Medal.

As I stand today to receive this award on their behalf, I am equally as honored and proud to represent them as their National President. I look forward next month at our National Convention to show this award to them and to hang this award proudly in our Montford Point National Museum.

Again, thank you for allowing me to be here. I hope you have a successful convention. (Applause)

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF DeNOYER: It makes me proud, being a Marine myself, and having been to Montford Point to be able to partake in presenting that award.

PRESENTATION OF ARMED FORCES AWARD TO LANDSTUHL REGIONAL MEDICAL CENTER

The VFW Armed Forces Award has been presented annually since 1964 to military members and organizations to recognize extraordinary achievement to the Armed Forces of the United States, the nation, and to our national security. In keeping with those extraordinary achievements, I take great pleasure in introducing our 2012 Armed Forces Award winner.

Colonel Barbara Holcomb is here today accepting the award on behalf of the Landstuhl Regional Medical Center and all of the dedicated military and civilian members assigned to treat our wounded there.

Landstuhl Regional Medical Center is an overseas military hospital operated by the United States Army and the Department of Defense. Since it opened its doors in 1953, it is the largest military hospital outside of the Continental United States and they are extremely critical to the survival of our wounded, ill and injured service members.

Landstuhl provides primary care, tertiary care, hospitalization and treatment for more than 245,000 U.S. personnel and their families within the European Command. It is also the nearest evacuation and treatment center for all injured U.S. service members and contractors, as well as members of 44 coalition forces serving Afghanistan, Iraq, the Africa Command, Central Command, European Command and Pacific Command.

Landstuhl Regional has treated and stabilized tens of thousands of victims of many recent world events and is vital to our mission. We owe the hospital and its workers a great debt and thank them for their due diligence in their everyday duties.

Taking care of the wounded and sick is not an easy task, and we know how taxing that can be on a caregiver. VFW holds Landstuhl and its staff in the highest regard for their steadfast efforts, and we hope this expresses our gratitude to all that are involved in this immensely important operation.

Landstuhl Regional Medical Center provides our American communities with hope and optimism with every service member they are able to send home safely to their families, and for that, we in the VFW and indeed all of America are grateful.

We also thank you for your outstanding contributions to our nation and for your dedication to the health and well-being of United States service members. The unwavering and enthusiastic employees and members of Landstuhl Regional Medical Center should be recognized for their tremendous efforts and we hope they know how essential they are to the survival and the spirits of America's finest and their loved ones at home.

Comrades and sisters, today we honor a group of individuals who fulfill the honorable tradition of extraordinary achievement represented by this award.

Please join me in welcoming Colonel Holcomb to accept the 2012 VFW Armed Forces Award on behalf of Landstuhl Regional Medical Center. (Applause)

ADJUTANT GENERAL KENT: "Armed Forces Award, Gold Medal and Citation awarded to Landstuhl Regional Medical Center. "In lasting recognition to the exemplary doctors, nurses and staff of the U.S. Army Landstuhl Regional Medical Center in Germany for their selfless devotion to duty and honor distinguished by the extraordinary dignity and genuine compassion with which they provide healing treatment to wounded U.S. and coalition service members.

"The dedicated and caring individuals and teams at the medical center have genuinely earned the highest form of admiration and respect for their professionalism, their unending concern and passion in caring for our wounded warriors.

"In Witness Whereof, we have hereunto set our hands and the official seal of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, this 23rd day of July, 2012. Approved by the National Council of Administration."

This has been signed by Richard L. DeNoyer, Commander-in-Chief, and Allen F. "Gunner" Kent, Adjutant General. (Applause)

RESPONSE BY COLONEL BARBARA HOLCOMB

COLONEL HOLCOMB: Commander-in-Chief DeNoyer, ladies and gentlemen, thank you so much. This is a great honor to be able to accept this award on behalf of the soldiers, sailors, airmen, Marines, the Department of Army civilians, local and national employees and volunteers.

Landstuhl is a very, very special place to work. We have treated over 68,000 casualties as they come through, and 14,000 of those have returned to duty. If you think about that, that is over 20 battalions that we have sent back to duty.

The most rewarding thing and the thing I hear most often as I walk through and visit with patients, they want to know how is my buddy, and how soon can I go back?

We have a tremendous armed forces, and these young men and women that come through truly do love what they are doing, and love supporting the nation and fighting for what they believe in and for what we all believe in.

So, thank you so much to the VFW National Organization, and thank you to the VFW European Department for the tremendous support that you give us at Landstuhl, for the support that you give to the military nationwide. And I also want to say thank you to all of you for your service, because really the only thing that separates me from you is a retirement date. So, thank you very much, and God's speed to everyone. (Applause)

PRESENTATION OF THE AMERICANISM AWARD

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF DeNOYER: The VFW Americanism Award is presented annually to individuals for their outstanding contributions to the American principles of patriotism, commitment to service, and love of country.

Since 1959, it has been presented to military personnel as well as to members of Congress, actors, entertainers, a billionaire, the Secretaries of Defense and Veterans Affairs, a Vice-President of the United States, and today we add an American newspaper correspondent.

I am delighted to be presenting the Americanism Award to a man who has served his country as a civilian, investigating and reporting from the four corners of the world on the major events of the last 50 years. That man is none other than Mr. Joe Galloway.

Joe is an American newspaper correspondent and columnist. He is the former Military Affairs Consultant for the Knight-Ridder chain of newspapers, and was a foreign war correspondent during the Vietnam War. He worked alongside troops as he covered the war and was awarded a Bronze Star for courageous action during one of his four tours in Vietnam for carrying wounded men to safety during the Ia Drang Valley Battle. He became the only civilian to be awarded a Military Medal of Valor.

Joe exemplifies the qualities required to win this very special award. He is a patriot through and through and has proven his love of country and service through his lifelong career of foreign war reporting, and he certainly went above and beyond his duties as a foreign correspondent when he carried our wounded service members to safety. And I am sure that was not part of his job description. His patriotism and high regard for the military and its troops is evident through his established and highly-regarded journalistic work.

Mr. Galloway is no stranger to receiving VFW awards. He was awarded the VFW News Media Award for his spectacular coverage of the Persian Gulf War in 1992, and we are pleased to be presenting him with yet another award to add to his distinguished resume.

We, in the VFW, admire Mr. Galloway's work so much that we invited him to be a judge for our Voice of Democracy competition two years in a row, in 2005 and 2006, and which he so generously spoke to all of the winners while in Washington, D.C.

It is with much pride and pleasure that I present the 2012 Americanism Award to someone whom we admire for his outstanding acts of bravery, patriotism and love for this nation's military. Please welcome Mr. Joe Galloway to the stage. (Applause)

ADJUTANT GENERAL KENT: "Americanism Award, Gold Medal and Citation presented to Joe Galloway.

"In special recognition and sincere appreciation of his outstanding contributions to the American principles of patriotism, commitment to service and love of country.

"His dedication to investigating and reporting the truths of war to Americans and his selfless acts of bravery to help American service members to safety during battle hold true to the traditions and values of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States. He has earned our upmost respect and gratitude.

"In Witness Whereof, we have hereunto set our hands and the official seal of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, this 23rd day of July, 2012. Approved by the National Council of Administration."

This has been signed by Richard L. DeNoyer, Commander-in-Chief, and Allen F. "Gunner" Kent, Adjutant General. (Applause)

RESPONSE – MR. JOE GALLOWAY

MR. GALLOWAY: Thank you, Commander-in-Chief DeNoyer. Thank you all, members of the VFW of whom I am one now. I got my Life Membership card from Post 2423, Indian Trail, North Carolina, last month.

(Applause) So, I thank you.

I am proud to be among you. You know, Reno being a tough town, I brought some guys to cover my back, and they have been covering my back for 48 years. They are Bruce Crandall, who wears a familiar blue ribbon around his neck of the Medal of Honor, Colonel Bruce Crandall. He is called Ancient Serpent Six, the initials of which were unfortunate, so he engineered a change to be called Old Snake, and it is accurate.

He flew me into the hell of battle, and thank God came back to get me later, much later, more times than one, and we are best of friends today.

Standing beside him is Chip Barker, who flew overhead cover in the Ia Drang, flying aerial rocket artillery ships, bringing hell down on the enemy, and also a friend for life. More importantly, my wife, Grace Lynn Galloway, and Jacques, the wonder dog, a small poodle, but a medical service dog trained for PTSD and traumatic brain injuries. Gracie is a Vietnam veteran, too, in her own way. (Applause)

She did three years in Saigon in the late sixties, working for the Catholic Relief, helping war orphans. We have been friends for 40-odd years, and she popped back on my radar in December, and we got married in May in Las Vegas.

I thank you for all you do for our veterans being veterans. I thank you for your service to our country and the wars of living memory. I am honored by the award you have given me, but I am honored far more by the fact that I was allowed in my youth to stand alongside you with a rifle in my arms and my camera thrown aside and do another job, the job of a soldier even briefly.

It is the greatest honor of my lifetime. I will cherish this award. I will cherish the memory of this assembly, and I hope to be able to shake as many hands as possible of you here. Thank you. God bless our country, God bless our troops serving in harm's way, and God bless you. (Applause)

INTRODUCTION OF DEPUTY MINISTER, VETERANS AFFAIRS COMMISSION, CHIN, HSIAO-HUI, REPUBLIC OF CHINA ON TAIWAN

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF DeNOYER: It is my privilege to introduce Deputy Minister Chin, Hsiao-hui of the Veterans Affairs Commission from the Republic of China on Taiwan.

Minister Chin served in his military for three decades and retired as a Major General in 1999 before joining the Veterans Affairs Commission, which is similar to our Department of Veterans Affairs.

The VAC was a gracious host when I visited Taiwan in March, a visit that also included meeting his country's president. I also want to thank him for hosting VFW Ladies Auxiliary National President Gwen Rankin when she visited in February.

The VFW has a special relationship with the Veterans Affairs Commission that goes back many years, and I am very pleased that he could join us in Reno this year.

Ladies and gentlemen, please welcome Deputy Minister Chin from the Republic of China on Taiwan. (Applause)

GREETINGS – CHIN, HSIAO-HUI, DEPUTY MINISTER, VETERANS
AFFAIRS COMMISSION, REPUBLIC OF CHINA ON TAIWAN

DEPUTY MINISTER CHIN: Thank you. Commander-in-Chief DeNoyer, National President Rankin, the Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen: Good morning.

It is my great honor to be invited to address your National Convention here in Reno in the great state of Nevada. Minister Tseng, Jing-ling, who came to your last commemoration in San Antonio, Texas, had planned to come again to this one, but an executive event just came up to force him to stay in Taiwan for the necessary regimen. So, here I am.

I thank you for allowing me to address you all. The VFW and the Veterans Affairs Commission in Taiwan have had a very strong relationship for nearly 50 years, and in the past 30-some years we have maintained exchanging top visits.

This past year I was very pleased to meet Commander-in-Chief DeNoyer, the Ladies Auxiliary President Rankin and their party. When they visited Taiwan, I hope they enjoyed their stay with us in Taipei.

Last year was the 100th anniversary of my country, the Republic of China on Taiwan. We are very appreciative that the VFW was represented by Past Commanders-in-Chief Jim Mueller, Larry Rivers, and Jan Owens, the Secretary-Treasurer of the Ladies Auxiliary to join a series of separate programs showing our achievements in every aspect.

It has been for years the VFW has passed resolutions in support of the Republic of China during your annual conventions, and we truly appreciate these friendships.

We on Taiwan, the Republic of China, have been presumed a life of peace, immigration and freedom, just like the Americans since May 20, 2008, when our President Ma Ying-jeou came in to his presidency. He has been trying very hard to promote peaceful development and win-win policies internationally, and across the Taiwan Strait relationships.

The first of four years of his first term has proven the popular team of his aforesaid policy. This year President Ma Ying-jeou won the election for his second term, and he promises he will continue his policy towards Mainland China and the United States, to bring it even better economics and the security for our people in the coming four years.

We appreciate very much that the United States has been so friendly to sell resources to us and help make what we are in Taiwan today. But security is always the top concern to every country when the soldiers don't like to wage war. Nobody should.

However, we in Taiwan bear in mind the old Chinese proverb that those who may have peace be prepared to fight in danger.

So, as our good VFW friends, we shall continue to pursue the defensive weapons that we cannot manufacture by ourselves, and we need to continue making friends like the United States. We have good VFW friends. We need your continued support by urging your federal government for the sale in accordance with the Taiwan Relations Act.

We also will need your support to help us, the Republic of China on Taiwan, to join the more international organizations so that we can be good enough to defend ourselves on the one hand and help stabilizing the Western Pacific area and the other areas.

Dear friends, we are lucky to have the camaraderie we have. You have

been helping us in the past years and we shall cherish it always. Thank you again for allowing me to speak at your Joint Opening Session, and I wish you a successful convention and good health to all of you.

Now, before leaving the podium, I would like to take the honor to present on behalf of President Ma Ying-jeou, a Medal of Order of Resplendent Banner with Cravat to Commander-in-Chief DeNoyer to express our great gratitude to him for his great efforts in strengthening our relationship.

I will ask Hans Song to read the citation. Thank you. (Applause)

MR. HANS SONG: "Certificate accompanying the award of the Order of Resplendent Banner with Cravat to Mr. Richard DeNoyer, Commander-in-Chief of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, in recognition of his significant contribution to the promotion of veterans and support of America's cooperation between the Republic of China and the United States of America.

"The award of the Order of Resplendent Banner with No. 3685 by the government of the Republic of China in accordance with Article 11 of the Armed Forces Declaration Regulations."

This has been signed by President Ma Ying-jeou, co-signed by Premier Wu Den-yih, and the Minister of National Defense, Kao Hua-chu. (Applause)

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF DeNOYER: As the General said when I met President Ma Ying-jeou, it was a great honor meeting the President of Taiwan, I was informed that he had served time in the Marine Corps, the Taiwan Marine Corps. So, I looked at him and I said, "Mr. President, have you heard the adage that the only thing tougher than being a Marine is being a Marine's wife?" He appreciated that immensely. He got the humor in that.

INTRODUCTION - VOICE OF DEMOCRACY WINNER

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF DeNOYER: For more than 65 years, the VFW National Voice of Democracy program has been in place.

This program provides students far and wide the opportunity to speak clearly about their values and give voice to how they perceive our nation and the many liberties afforded to them. No one has a greater interest in this country than someone who has defended it on foreign battlefields and seen good friends die for it. What is reflected in this program is an extension of America's values and its ideals. This premier scholarship program helps ensure our nation's heritage will never be lost.

Student interest is what keeps the program going, and in time, that interest will be manifested in the form of leadership, and that leadership will help guide our nation for future generations to come.

Education and knowledge are the best weapons against any type of tyranny, and these young people are well-armed to face the challenges of their future and America's future. They won't be sitting around rewriting America's history; they will be out there making it.

Of all of our VFW programs, none lets us have a better perspective of what the future holds than when we see the submissions made to the program by so many of our nation's young people communicating pride, patriotism and love of country.

Miss Elizabeth Scannell's outstanding entry to the selected VOD theme,

"Is There Pride in Serving in our Military?," correctly earned her the esteemed title of the 2011-2012 National Voice of Democracy Winner.

Elizabeth will enter her senior year at the Berkley County Middle College High School in Moncks Corner, South Carolina, this fall. She plans to pursue a career as a research analyst or in the fields of economics or library science. Elizabeth is representative of the many thousands of young people who participate in this scholarship program annually. She and her peer group are the future of our country. What they are today, America will be tomorrow.

Please join me in welcoming and celebrating Elizabeth Scannell's achievement as the 2011-2012 Voice of Democracy Winner. (Applause)

VOICE OF DEMOCRACY WINNER PRESENTATION

MS. ELIZABETH SCANNELL: It was a privilege to participate in the Voice of Democracy event, and it is a great honor to be here today. "Is There Pride in Serving in our Military?"

After weeks of grueling training and insurmountable challenges that tested them to their very limits, the day has finally come. Families watch with admiration as sons and daughters stand at attention in razor sharp uniforms. The Commanding Officer addresses the crowd as the recruits silently recount their own transformations during these past weeks. They have conquered their fears and have surpassed every expectation. They have risen to the top and have learned the tools to become a leader. This experience has molded them into confident and quality individuals. They are proud of who they are and for what they are able to affirm. The Commanding Officer steps back from the podium and turns to face the graduates. The day has finally come. "Welcome to the United States military."

For many a soldier, that was the beginning of one of the proudest times of their lives. Pride, like love, is not some tangible force you can have and hold. Pride is seen. It is seen in the way one holds himself, how one speaks, how one acts. As Marine Captain Angie Morgan stated, "It is about being accountable, exceeding performance standards, being disciplined, decisive, and ultimately, about being authentic every single day and working hard to motivate, influence and inspire others." This is a quintessential military member speaking with grace and humility, because she is proud to give voice to the message and meaning of her country.

We are proud of our armed forces and honor them for their selfless sacrifices. However, we know they do not go into harm's way for medals, ribbons or accolades. The American soldier stands watch because he is proud to uphold the highest standards of our nation's values. Like 16-year veteran Sergeant Michael Grant who has been deployed around the globe and twice stationed in Iraq, whether on a peace mission or fighting for those who cannot defend their homes, he prides himself on bringing "positivity to the world." Service members are also proud to stand with fellow warriors, not only to safeguard the homeland, but each other, too. This was exemplified by Sergeant Alwin Cashe who was on patrol in Iraq when a roadside bomb set ablaze his Bradley fighting vehicle. Although injured, Sergeant Cashe managed to escape but, realizing others were trapped, he reacted, because the valiant "Leave No Man Behind."

Sergeant Cashe saved six men that heroic day from which he incurred

additional injuries and eventually paid the ultimate price. For these noble reasons, men and women are proud to serve in the United States military as they ensure the well-being of our country and citizens. Domestically, nowhere was that felt more than during the Hurricane Katrina crisis. U.S. military troops rescued more than 33,000 fellow Americans while also providing disaster relief to the multitudes in the form of medical aid, food and clean water. As Captain Jones, from the Coast Guard, stated while describing the scene of the round-the-clock operation and its rescuers, "I've never seen either people that were more exhausted and more beat up and tired and at the same time had a higher morale in my life."

There is pride in serving in our military. From the few the proud, to army strong, aim high, always be ready and not self but country, our Marines, Soldiers, Airmen, Coast Guardsmen and Sailors are making a difference in their communities and in societies across the globe. These men and women leave family and friends, understanding the risks perhaps to set foot on foreign soil against hidden enemies to protect our country. They are proud to fight for the land of the free and home of the brave. They are proud to secure the blessings of liberty for us and generations to come. They are proud to stand together beneath a brilliant flag of stars and stripes. And so, to every soldier, whether past or present, I say thank you. Thank you for making me proud of our United States military. (Applause)

INTRODUCTION – EKATERINA GENNADIEVNA PRIEZZHEVA, CO-CHAIR OF THE U.S. RUSSIAN COMMISSION ON POW/MIAS, MINISTRY OF DEFENSE, RUSSIAN FEDERATION

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF DeNOYER: It is now my privilege to introduce from the Russian Federation, the Co-Chairman of the U.S.-Russian Joint Commission on POW/MIAs, Ms. Ekaterina Priezzheva, who is also the Senior Advisor to the Russian Defense Ministry on Social Issues.

The U.S.-Russian Joint Commission was created in 1992 by Presidents George H.W. Bush and Boris Yeltsin to help determine the fates of missing American and Russian soldiers. In 2004, however, the Russian government eliminated their co-chairman's position, which effectively shut down the Joint Commission, to include America's access to Russia's Central Military Archives, a potential treasure trove of information regarding missing Americans from World War II, Korea, Vietnam and the Cold War.

In July 2009, President Obama exchanged diplomatic notes with then Russian President Medvedev to revitalize the Joint Commission.

An acting co-chairman was appointed on the Russian side, and American researchers were allowed back into the Central Military Archives as well as access to potential eyewitnesses. American forces also continued to provide lost coordinates when Russian graves or aircraft crash sites were discovered in Afghanistan.

But what was missing was a full-time Russian co-chairman, so the VFW led an effort with six other veterans and POW/MIA family organizations to write President Medvedev, who in June 2011, issued a decree to reconstitute the Russian side of the Presidential Commission less than three weeks after we wrote.

I am extremely pleased that Ms. Priezzheva could travel to Reno to be with us, and I hope the Joint Commission will continue to have much success in returning missing American and Russian soldiers back home to

their loving families.

Please help me give a warm VFW welcome to the Co-Chairman of the U.S.-Russian Commission on POW/MIAs, Ms. Ekaterina Priezzheva. (Applause)

GREETINGS – MS. EKATERINA PRIEZZHEVA

MS. PRIEZZHEVA: Ladies and gentlemen, let me express my appreciation for the invitation to take part in such a significant event. I am honored to attend and speak at the 113th National Convention of the Veterans of Foreign Wars.

Thanks to your deeds, this organization has received wide recognition, not only in the Americas, but beyond. To honor the dead by helping the living, that's the main idea behind your work. We know that thanks to this organization's initiatives, a number of laws to protect military personnel and veterans were adopted, and Veterans Day was declared a national holiday at the initiative of the VFW.

The VFW works to ensure a good future for not only those who served this country but also their family members. It is a noble mission, it is well-known that your organization constantly does a great deal to ensure decent living standards for Veterans of Foreign Wars and those in harm's conflicts. Your work helps many service members to recover from the hardships and tribulations that they experienced. It gathers information about events from the Second World War, from the wars in Korea, Vietnam, Afghanistan and about the events that occurred during the Cold War, and it provides social benefits and guarantees for those who participated in these wars.

Our common concern for service members and their families is truly a holy thing, the basis on which Russia and the United States build their cooperation and mutual support. One of the priorities of the VFW is to search for deceased and missing service members.

As the Co-Chairman of the United States-Russian Joint Commission on Prisoners of War, internees and MIAs, I fully realize the responsibility to our respective Presidents, to the American and Russian people for the completion of this honorable and humanitarian commission, as well as for the consistent and full compliance with our international obligations. For 20 years our countries have been helping each other to search for information about service members who did not return from action. Our work is a great opportunity to clarify the fates of those who died in action and are missing, and it is our duty to find documents and data about every single service member who is missing to clarify his or her fate, and to help their family members and friends overcome the severity of the irreplaceable loss.

On this day, let me express my sincere gratitude to all members of the Veterans of Foreign Wars for accomplishing a difficult and noble mission, and to wish you all success in completing future missions.

Thank you. (Applause)

DEPARTMENT OF ARIZONA CONSECUTIVE YEARS OF GROWTH CITATION

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF DeNOYER: For 45 years, the members of the Department of Arizona have come together as a team to consecutively

increase VFW membership throughout the state.

Each member of the Department of Arizona can take tremendous pride in their many years of dedication and hard work that has gone into reaching this momentous milestone.

Now, in recognition of those efforts, I would like to call on Tim Borland, Immediate Past Commander of Arizona, to accept this “Consecutive Years of Membership Growth” citation.

Congratulations to all in the great Department of Arizona. (Applause)

ADJUTANT GENERAL KENT: “Certificate of Commendation awarded to Department of Arizona in recognition of the remarkable achievement of 45 consecutive years of continuous membership sustained by a Department of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States.

“In Witness Whereof, we have hereunto set our hands and the official seal of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, this 23rd day of July, 2012.”

This has been signed by Richard L. DeNoyer, Commander-in-Chief, and Allen “Gunner” Kent, Adjutant General. (Applause)

NATIONAL RECRUITER AWARD TO JACK TURNER

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF DeNOYER: Now, I have the pleasure of presenting the National Recruiter of the Year Award to an individual who is no stranger to performing this vital mission, nor to this award.

This year he has recruited a phenomenal 316 new or reinstated members. By any measure of recruiting success in recent memory, this is an outstanding accomplishment and fully deserves to be well-recognized by all of us.

From Post 1512, located in Lemon Grove, in the Department of California, please welcome Jack Turner, the National Recruiter of the Year. (Applause)

PRESENTATION OF LEGACY LIFE CONTEST WINNERS

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF DeNOYER: The VFW’s Legacy Life Membership provides an opportunity for Life Members to leave their mark on the nation’s largest combat veterans’ organization. Membership in this fraternity of distinguished and committed VFW members not only offers expanded and exclusive benefits, but also helps ensure that the VFW’s good work will continue for generations to come.

That is accordingly the true meaning of the word “legacy” in this most notable and important program.

The winners of the Commander-in-Chief’s Legacy Life Contest deserve to be fully congratulated for their efforts and achievements; and they are:

Stanley Fernandez, Department of Hawaii Commander

Bruce Hollinger, Department of Nevada Commander

Barry Hirshbein, Department of the Pacific Areas Commander

Kelly Goddard, Department of West Virginia Commander

Vergil Morris, New Mexico District 8 Commander

Ronald Jagodnik, Oregon District 15 Commander

Stanley Stewart, Pacific Areas District 1 Commander

Robert Moses, Pacific Areas District 2 Commander

Robert Chesko, Pacific Areas District 7 Commander

Michael Childers, District 8 West Virginia Commander
Bruce Hughes, Commander of Post 8071 in Nevada
Herman Hagen, Commander of Post 10468 in Nevada
Lloyd Johnson, Commander of Post 1598 in Ohio
Raymond Burke, Commander of Post 1835 in Pennsylvania
Richard Best, Commander of Post 842 in Pennsylvania
Joel Boland, Commander of Post 7767 in Texas
Comrades, one more time, please stand and be recognized. (Applause)

PRESENTATION OF THE DWIGHT D. EISENHOWER AWARD
TO GENERAL RAYMOND ODIERNO

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF DeNOYER: It brings me great pleasure to introduce our next guest and award recipient.

The VFW has presented the Dwight D. Eisenhower Award annually since 1970 to one individual for his or her contributions to American security, unity and world peace. It recognizes extraordinary contributions and achievements to secure the nation from foreign threats, to advance the interests of the nation abroad, and to inspire the American public to support these efforts as we journey toward the goal of world peace.

The Eisenhower Award is named after our 34th President, who along with seven other U.S. Presidents proudly called themselves members of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States.

Today, I am honored and excited to introduce you to this year's Dwight D. Eisenhower Award recipient, General Raymond T. Odierno, Chief of Staff of the United States Army.

As a graduate of the United States Military Academy at West Point; North Carolina State University; the Naval War College; and the U.S. Army War College, General Odierno holds many degrees, including two Master's, one of which is in National Security and Strategy.

His education alone shows his dedication and pride to his country and it has only deepened as his military career progressed.

The General has held many different roles and leadership positions defending and protecting this country spanning over three decades. This includes receiving nearly 50 decorations, awards and medals.

General Odierno started his career as a platoon leader and survey officer of the 1st Battalion, 41st Field Artillery, 56th Field Artillery Brigade with the U.S. 7th Army in Europe. He went on to be an aide-de-camp to the Pershing Missile Brigade's Commanding General; he commanded service and alpha batteries with the 1st Battalion, 73rd Field Artillery Regiment at Fort Bragg, and served as the Executive Officer for the 2nd Battalion, 3rd Field Artillery during Operation Desert Storm. He commanded the 4th Infantry Division and then the Three Corps at Fort Hood before going to Albania to serve as Arms Control Officer, Officer of the Security of Defense and Deputy Commanding General, Task Force Hawk.

He returned to the United States as the Assistant to the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff where he was the primary military adviser to Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice. He took command of U.S. Joint Forces Command in 2010 where it became evident to all of us what a tremendous leader we had for our heroic troops in Iraq. Following that highly successful tour of duty, General Odierno was nominated to be the

38th Army Chief of Staff and took over in September of last year.

It would take me all day to tell you all of his positions within the army, but from that list, one can truly understand that General Odierno has served a lifetime's worth for this country and he has climbed the ranks to prove his dedication to national security and to this nation.

The magnitude of General Odierno's career demonstrates the enormous sacrifices he has made for his country. He has achieved tremendous personal and military success throughout his 36 years defending this great nation, and he has done it with pride, selflessness and bravery. He upholds the utmost qualities of a United States soldier and exemplifies a true American hero.

We, as Americans, are lucky to have such an inspiring individual leading our United States Army and in our presence today. But more importantly, our troops are blessed to have leading them what they consider to be the ultimate soldier's soldier.

Comrades and sisters, may I present to you, the recipient of the 2012 VFW Dwight D. Eisenhower Award, General Raymond Odierno. (Applause)

ADJUTANT GENERAL KENT: "Dwight D. Eisenhower Distinguished Service Award, Gold Medal and Citation presented to General Raymond T. Odierno, United States Army Chief of Staff, in special recognition and sincere appreciation for answering our nation's call to service, for his outstanding contributions to national security and extraordinary achievements within the United States Army.

"His unrivaled experience and dedication to mission accomplishment, as well as to those who carry out his orders, make him the ultimate soldier's soldier, and are true to the ideals, traditions and values of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States.

"In Witness Whereof, we have hereunto set our hands and the official seal of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, this 23rd day of July, 2012. Approved by the National Council of Administration."

This has been signed by Richard L. DeNoyer, Commander-in-Chief, and Allen F. "Gunner" Kent, Adjutant General. (Applause)

RESPONSE – GENERAL RAYMOND ODIERNO

GENERAL ODIERNO: Good morning. First, I want to just thank everyone. It is inspiring for me to see so many veterans who have journeyed from across the United States to be here this week. I am both honored and humbled to receive the Eisenhower Distinguished Service Award, and this means a great deal to me.

The former 34th President of the United States, also the 16th Army Chief of Staff, Dwight D. Eisenhower, once remarked that: "Humility must always be the portion of any man who receives acclaim earned in the blood of his followers and the sacrifices of his friends."

So, today, I would like to pay tribute to the service of thousands of military men and women who have served this Nation honorably in combat, as well as the thousands of veterans who have been wounded and permanently disabled, and finally to those who have given the ultimate sacrifice to defend what is so sacred to us today, our freedom. I accept this award in their honor.

For the past 113 years, the Veterans of Foreign Wars has promptly

invested in the welfare of military veterans. As your motto so aptly states that “no one does more for our veterans.”

In that light, I would like to recognize Richard DeNoyer, the Commander-in-Chief, Gwen Rankin, the head of the Ladies Auxiliary. On behalf of the two million members of the VFW, thank you both for your leadership, your service and for hosting this spectacular event.

The Veterans of Foreign Wars is one of our nation's most iconic organizations. You represent generations of United States veterans, linked by service and dedication to our Nation. Your service did not end when you hung up your uniform.

Through functions like this one, you have continued to serve this Nation and give voice to the lessons of those who have defended freedom. Your efforts have indeed, shaped the very structure of our military and how we secure this Nation. For that, I and all of us are personally grateful. This year we are observing the 60th commemoration of the Korean War, and the 50th commemoration of the start of the Vietnam War. I know that many of you here today served in those conflicts, and I want to thank you for your service then and your service now that you provide our Nation today.

A lesson we have learned from President Eisenhower's generation, the Greatest Generation, is that the service and sacrifice of a single generation can leave all of us a better life, and in turn our children, our grandchildren, and our grandchildren's children. To all the members of this great organization, I salute you for your service in conflict on foreign soils. You did not serve for money, easy work or glory. Rather you served out of love for your country, your families and each other. Every time we asked you to pack your duffle bags and move out, you did so with no questions asked. You understand words like duty, honor and country. You also understand the words like fear, hunger, fatigue, loneliness and death. During your time in service, on battlefields far from home, you exemplified words like courage, compassion, bravery, valor and loyalty. It is because of you, our veterans, that we enjoy freedom in our American way of life. To paraphrase Winston Churchill, never before have so many owed so less to so few. America remains the land of the free because of the brave. (Applause)

However, we must realize behind veterans are moms and dads, sons and daughter, brothers and sisters, the families of loved ones of our veterans are unsung heroes. They are the ones that patiently waited and kept the home fire burning, writing letters and hoping that the loved ones would safely return. Their caring love and unwavering support are also essential to our Nation's strength, so it is fitting that we thank them. So, I would like to recognize the support of the Ladies Auxiliary and all family members. Thank you for your steadfast commitment to our veterans.

Every year, thousands of these service members transition from active and reserve status to veterans. The Army recently instituted the “Soldier for Life Campaign” to help transition our soldiers from the Army.

This program will help our newest veterans enter an established network to connect them with the resources required to support a successful reentry into the workforce. As we move forward, I ask all veterans to help us ensure that Americans know that our newest veterans are stronger for the experience and ready to lead in the workforce as they have led overseas. Like you, they are selfless, disciplined, innovative, and they have lived with moral and ethical courage. This makes them a welcome addition to any organization or company.

They join your ranks with great pride, eager to continue their service to a great Nation. It is incumbent upon us to ensure that America understands their tremendous potential. Today, as I stand in front of you, I am incredibly proud of over the 1.3 million servicemen and women who have deployed in the defense of this Nation since 2001. This generation of young men and women has remained steadfast and committed to our Nation's security. They will join you as special Americans who are experienced in the defense of freedom. I am dedicated to ensuring that we remain committed to these great Americans, like you, who have served and continue to serve our Nation.

I dedicate this award to them. Thank you again for this tremendous honor. Thank you for what you do. Thank you for what you represent. Thank you for ensuring that we continue to have this great Nation like no other around the world. Thank you for serving.

It is my honor to stand here in front of you today. May God bless our military, may God bless America. Thank you so much. (Applause)

PRESENTATION OF AWARDS TO 2011 ALL AMERICAN DEPARTMENT, DISTRICT AND POST COMMANDERS

ADJUTANT GENERAL KENT: Certainly, the most prestigious recognition earned as a Commander in the Veterans of Foreign Wars is to be named a member of the All American team. We have 22 Department Commanders, 31 District Commanders and 185 Post Commanders who have earned that distinguished title and most are with us today. I will now be joined by Commander-in-Chief DeNoyer, Senior Vice Commander-in-Chief John Hamilton, and Junior Vice Commander-in-Chief Bill Thien to present the All American Commander Awards to this elite group.

Alabama

Post:

Jerry L. Willibey, Post 2214
Walter G. Dempster, Post 6226

Alaska

Department:

Alvin J. Moyer, Post 10252

Post:

Marty L. Harris, Post 9785

Arizona

Department:

Timothy M. Borland, Post 9972

Post:

Bobby Jones, Post 6310
William H. Whidden, Post 12098
Charles B. Walters, Post 9400
Daniel F. Rowland, Post 10188
Frederick J. Mohun, Post 9401

Arkansas

Department:

David S. Bramlett, Post 4764

District:

Steve Milbourn, Post 1674

Ashley A. Little, Post 4548

Post:

Steve K. Milbourn, Post 1674

California

Department:

Bobby R. Price, Post 2111

District:

Dale E. Smith, Post 3783

Gary C. Reason, Post 8762

William H. Seifert, Post 8547

Post:

Alexander W. Brown, Post 1512

Richard C. Neitzelt, Post 2111

Ronald J. Bonnin, Post 5867

Joseph D. Snyder, Post 9934

Sherrod N. Conyers, Post 2122

Bobby R. Price, Post 4084

Loren E. Barton, Post 904

David Ramsey, Post 1487

Jonathan H. North, Post 4647

Donald T. Durnil, Post 4089

Colorado

Post:

G. A. Wolusky, Post 7829

Delaware

Department:

John R. Morrow, Post 475

Post:

Richard A. Norman, Post 4961

District of Columbia

Department:

Herman C. Salley, Post 2979

Europe

Department:

Matthew W. Coulter, Post 27

District:

Lance W. Howard, Post 10557

Post:

James L. Holliman, Post 10692

Florida

District:

Francis X. Collum, Post 4300

Post:

Steven H. Schneider, Post 8255

James L. Smith, Post 4534

Terry L. Howard, Post 8696

Francis X. Collum, Post 4300

Georgia

Department:

Pledge M. Cannon, Post 9998

District:

James R. Coggins, Post 5080

Richard M. Attaway, Post 4629
Darrell W. Harp, Post 8385

Post:

Danny L. Gardner, Post 2681
Charles A. Dobbins, Post 5080
Franky A. Hicks, Post 665
Jesse W. Davis, Post 8385
Gary W. Nelms, Post 5978

Hawaii

Department:

Stanley Y. Fernandez, Post 10276

Post:

Kenneth Wiseman, Post 970
Joseph F. Bragg, Post 2875

Idaho

Department:

George M. Peacock, Post 3646

District:

Larry D. Mackey, Post 9036

Post:

Thurman D. Benda, Post 2738

Illinois

Department:

William M. Phillips, Post 4079

District:

Kenneth W. Samborski, Post 2486
Willard W. Erickson, Post 1984
Glen F. Goodrich, Post 4495

Post:

Richard A. Luemen, Post 5220
Arthur M. Sheehan, Post 1307
Daniel J. Flanagan, Post 4079
John A. Metzger, Post 2671
George F. Foy, Post 5917

Indiana

District:

Herbert L. Mullen, Post 286

Post:

James L. McClure, Post 2749
John K. Ayres, Post 1152
William E. Baker, Post 7081
Jerry O. Blake, Post 1114

Kentucky

Department:

Robert O. Hendrickson, Post 8639

Latin America/Caribbean

Department:

Jose A. Claudio, Post 3822

Louisiana

Department:

Fred A. Wesley, Post 12065

Post:

Gerald G. Dugas, Post 3121

Elvin R. Bass, Post 3337

Maryland

Department:

George F. Helmcamp, Post 5838

District:

Bobby J. Elswick, Post 2996

Post:

Howard Adams, Post 194

Thomas L. Rippon, Post 8276

Minnesota

Post:

Scott A. Bill, Post 3915

Mississippi

Department:

David B. Mason, Post 5393

Missouri

District:

Clifford W. Mitchem, Post 6274

Post:

Thomas W. Mundell, Post 3944

Montana

Post:

Jack A. Hawley, Post 1087

Nevada

Department:

Merlin B. Hollinger, Post 8336

District:

Edward G. Morrissey, Post 10054

Charles W. Riley, Post 8336

Post:

David A. Sousa, Post 3396

David E. Brauckmiller, Post 2313

Gerald L. Peterson, Post 12101

Jon M. Fennych, Post 10047

New Mexico

Post:

Tyrand M. Teel, Post 5890

Raul V. Sanchez, Post 6917

Gerald A. Grace, Post 12071

North Carolina

Post:

Thomas L. Person, Sr., Post 6018

Ohio

Department:

Gerald J. Ward, Post 5713

District:

Terry L. Brown, Post 3331

Robert J. Mulligan, Post 9893

Post:

Terry L. Brown, Post 3331

Jerry T. Jodrey, Post 8736

Oregon

Department:

Bert W. Key, Post 4273

District:

Ronald W. Jagodnik, Post 3973

Post:

John R. Wrinkle, Post 4108

Terry E. Boyer, Post 4273

Juan M. Palacios, Post 10626

Pacific Areas

Department:

Barry A. Hirshbein, Post 3457

District:

Gerald L. Kraus, Post 1509

Post:

Homer B. Kemper, Post 1054

William W. Bradford, Post 2917

Robert C. Chesko, Post 2485

Pennsylvania

Post:

Eugene L. Myers, Post 8951

South Carolina

Post:

Garfield L. Woods, Post 6734

Tennessee

Post:

Larry C. Helser, Post 11160

Texas

District:

Antonio D. Vasquez, Post 76

James W. Van Rite, Post 4695

Post:

Jay W. Sanders, Post 912

William E. Shaffer, Post 2427

Rene Guerrero, Post 5619

John R. Hillier, Post 8919

Allen R. Freeman, Post 3892

Calvin L. Guthrie, Post 4008

Kenneth R. Schelsteder, Post 4709

Albert Mireles, Jr., Post 76

Wayne R. Crain, Post 837

Gilbert R. Uriegas, Post 1533

Gilbert Cadena, Post 7108

Jose L. Rodriguez, Post 8936

John A. Lunkwicz, Post 10454

Darrell A. Elliott, Post 1815

Charles J. Kobes, Post 4372

Ernest P. Rodriguez, Post 8925

Utah

Department:

Matthew O. Stuart, Post 3586

District:

James C. McKee, Post 409

Post:

Danny L. Zaharias, Post 409
Vernon R. Wade, Post 3586
Kendall D. Workman, Post 12087
Douglas R. Larson, Post 1481
Warren J. Johnson, 6395

Virginia

Post:

Michael P. Boehme, Post 9808
Thomas F. Gimble, Post 1503

Washington

Post:

Thelbert M. Lawson, Jr., 3617

West Virginia

Department:

Melvin K. Goddard, Post 4484

Wisconsin

Post:

Michele A. Rathke, Post 1638
David G. Green, 10818

PRESENTATION OF ALL AMERICAN TRIPLE CROWN AWARDS

ADJUTANT GENERAL KENT: The term "Triple Crown Winner" is universally applied for an extraordinarily exceptional accomplishment.

Winning all three major thoroughbred horse races is considered the greatest accomplishment of a race horse and on the very infrequent occasion it occurs — it was last accomplished in 1977 — the thoroughbred is thus known as the "Triple Crown Winner."

In Major League baseball, a player earns the Triple Crown when he leads a league in three specific statistical categories.

For batters, a player must lead the league in homeruns, runs batted in and batting average; pitchers much lead the league in wins, strikeouts and earned run average.

Again, this is a very rare occurrence and the last to do so was Carl Yastremski of the Boston Red Sox in 1967. How was that, all you Yankee fans out there? I didn't write that one.

The VFW has its own class of "thoroughbreds" and "Major Leaguers", who are also known as Triple Crown Winners as a result of their astonishing distinctive membership recruiting achievements at the department, district and post levels.

Ladies and gentlemen, it gives me great pleasure in recognizing this year's select group of VFW's Triple Crown Winners:

From the Department of Arizona is Timothy Borland.

Next is George Helmcamp, from the Department of Maryland.

And from the Department of Nevada, Bruce Hollinger.

Next is Gerald Kraus from the Department of the Pacific Areas.

And from the Department of Utah, James McKee.

And last, but certainly as equal, Comrade Matthew Stuart, also from the Department of Utah.

Commanders, congratulations for attaining such a notable record of accomplishment, and to all you comrades, thank you all for your extremely hard work and dedication this year. Let's give a round of applause to the All Americans and the Triple Crown Winners. (Applause)

PRESENTATION OF TEACHER AWARDS

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF DeNOYER: For more than a century, we have placed great emphasis on educating our nation's youth on civic responsibility, flag etiquette and patriotism. In 1999, the National Citizenship Education Teacher Award was created to recognize teachers who strive to implement these values into their classroom curriculum.

This year's award winners are three exceptionally devoted Americans who have undoubtedly fulfilled their responsibilities as citizens of the United States through the art of teaching.

These three honorees were selected from across the nation for their originality and dedication to citizenship education. They have effectively encouraged their students to become better citizens by spreading knowledge of our nation's history, and its institutions.

INTRODUCTION – DEBRA HOWELL, TEACHER AWARD, MONTE CRISTO ELEMENTARY SCHOOL, SNOHOMISH WASHINGTON

It is my pleasure to introduce you to the National Citizenship Education Teacher of the Year, representing grades K-5, Mrs. Debra Howell of Snohomish, Washington.

Mrs. Howell has a unique teaching environment where she teaches in a multi-age classroom with students ranging from third to sixth-graders. Her peers express how well she handles the age difference and curriculum within the classroom, and we are truly amazed. Being that she teaches multiple grade levels at a time, Debra is well-versed in teaching her students all subjects. Through these various subjects Debra instills deep feelings of patriotism, citizenship and high regard and respect for our nation's veterans and active-duty troops at every opportunity she gets.

Debra has been teaching in the Granite Falls School District for 26 years and last year she received an enormous honor signifying her excellence in teaching America's youth. She was inducted into the National Teacher Hall of Fame. This is certainly not the only honor Debra has received in her career as a teacher. She was the Wal-Mart Regional Teacher of the Year in 2004 and Washington State Teacher of the Year in 2008 and 2009. There is a running list of awards and recognition Debra has received, and the VFW is proud to be added to that list this year.

Debra has been promoting patriotism in her students for decades and we couldn't be more thankful to her for her deep devotion to country. She instills values in her students that have resulted in momentous events in her community. Her students led a successful campaign to get the Granite Falls Veterans Day Parade reinstated, after an 80-year hiatus. When they realized they were successful in their mission, they invited a Vietnam veteran to be the Grand Marshal. What an honor it must have been for that veteran. Wow!

She inspired her students to write and appear before the school board to request that all schools in their district be required to fly the POW/ MIA flag, and again, her students were successful at their mission because of the values they have been taught about American patriotism and the importance of the troops.

Her students distribute buddy poppies on Veterans Day, which in Washington State, I imagine is blistering cold, which really shows their dedication they learned from their teacher.

Her students also email and write letters to the troops year round and send hundreds of care packages. The soldiers who have been fortunate enough to receive these priceless gifts from Mrs. Howell's students come visit the kids when they return home to let them know how much they appreciated the letters and gifts.

As part of her curriculum, she has the students participate in the Patriot's Pen Essay competition every year. The values she has taught these kids does not only last while they are in her classroom. They go out into the community to help spread patriotism and civic responsibility. This is evident in the fact that they continue to participate in VFW scholarship programs like the Voice of Democracy Audio-Essay Competition as they continue on in school.

It's people like Debra that truly make a difference in this world. Teaching her students to have and demonstrate paramount regard for veterans is just one of many reasons Mrs. Howell is receiving this award today.

She is an inspiration and role model to her students and the community, and we are so honored to have her among the elite individuals who teach the youth of this great country.

Please join me in welcoming Mrs. Debra Howell, sponsored by VFW Post 1501 in Arlington, Washington. (Applause)

ADJUTANT GENERAL KENT: "National Citizenship Education Teacher Award, grade level K-5, presented to Debra Howell, Monte Cristo Elementary School, 2012-2013." (Applause)

REMARKS – DEBRA HOWELL, TEACHER AWARD

MS. HOWELL: Thank you so much for this honor to be here today with all of you. I have to tell you it would be a lot easier if you were all nine, ten and eleven-year-olds. This is a little intimidating.

I want to start by saying that I am a very proud women's Auxiliary member, 1561 Post, Washington State, Arlington. (Applause)

When I was preparing some short comments to make today, one of the images that came to my mind was in 1967, I was six years old, and everything that I have read with my students and things we have talked about related to the Vietnam War and the images that were first seen in black and white on the news, and those memories of watching my father lay down on the floor next to the television, watching it and leaning over the top of him and asking him, "What is going on; what is this?"

He would try to explain to me what it all meant, what it all stood for. I think those images have stayed with me more than anything else as far as my work with veterans.

We had the most amazing community in Granite Falls, Washington. This award is for that community. The kids, my fellow teachers and friends

who are here today, it is about everybody working together. One person can't do this.

We have lots and lots of great teachers in our school district. So, when you see kids and you think they are all a bunch of punks, there are a lot of great kids out there that are making a difference, and really do love and honor you veterans. They really do. (Applause)

As the Commander mentioned in the opening statements, we work very, very hard. My brother, Mike, and I teach together, team teach together. He is not here today, so, Mike, I know you are watching. He is the one that is really responsible for the POW/MIA flag.

When I found out I would be getting some monetary award with this, we started working on getting all of the schools in the Granite Falls School District to fly the flag. So, in September, they all will be flying the POW/MIA flag. (Applause) It is very cool.

So, lastly, I would just like to thank my amazing friends throughout here today. I love you all. My family, who traveled all the way from Washington State to be here and to celebrate together, Carol, I love you, you are wonderful. And I would like to dedicate this award to my father-in-law Bill Howell, who is a World War II veteran, and to my amazing dad, Dwayne Sherman, who is also a veteran.

Thank you for this honor. (Applause)

PRESENTATION OF THE TEACHER AWARD TO KELLY McDERMOTT, HIDDEN OAKS MIDDLE SCHOOL, PRIOR LAKE, MINNESOTA

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF DeNOYER: Unfortunately, the next teacher we wanted to honor was unable to be here under her doctor's advisement against traveling, but that won't keep us from describing the exemplary teacher she is. Therefore, it is my pleasure to announce the National Citizenship Education Teacher of the Year, representing grades 6-8, Mrs. Kelly McDermott, a seventh and eighth grade mathematics teacher at Hidden Oaks Middle School in Prior Lake, Minnesota.

Mrs. McDermott's fellow peers and community believes she holds the values and inspiration it takes to be awarded the VFW National Citizenship Award for Educators, and we couldn't agree more. We are absolutely thrilled to name such a brilliant woman the Educator of the Year for grades six-eight.

Since 2007, Kelly has been instilling patriotism and civic responsibility in her students through various programs. I have a feeling 2007 wasn't the first time she displayed her love of country and her utmost respect and gratitude toward the troops and veterans.

Mrs. McDermott initiated a troop-support program five years ago in order to connect her math students with deployed service members. This program provides her students with a real-world appreciation for national service, personal commitment and the rights and freedoms provided to Americans by those who defend us.

There are many individuals in this world who do not understand or hold these values in high regard and we are so thankful to have a wonderful person like her teaching our youth these extremely important principles that often get overlooked.

Through this troop-support program, Kelly has her students write letters to deployed troops because, as most of you know, it can get very lonely

on duty and sometimes a letter from a young person who truly cares and appreciates us is just what we need.

She also organizes care packages to be sent to various units overseas with the help of her students who gather items and pack the boxes. They also send packages to Iraqi children who we all know are innocent in this war and have little to be thankful for.

She arranges Skype communications during class time between her students and deployed service members. This allows students to understand, firsthand, what it means to defend your country and it gives them the understanding they need to have the respect for our troops that they so badly deserve.

Between coordinating care package send-offs, writing letters to the troops and teaching her students about patriotism and mathematics, she has earned herself quite a few recognitions from her outstanding teaching methods and commendable civic service.

She was selected as Middle School Teacher of the Year in 2008 and 2009, and was awarded the 2009 "Star of the North" Award from the Minnesota Congressmen for promoting local community service and national troop support. The list truly goes on and on.

Mrs. McDermott continually focuses on developing her students into mature young adults who can truly appreciate what it means to wear the uniform. She has demonstrated time and again her passion for community service and her dedication for the United States military. She is a patriot through and through, and we thank her for passing these ideals down to her students. Her dedication should be an inspiration to all as she emulates impeccably high standards in youth mentoring.

Mrs. McDermott certainly has done her part in making sure our youth understand and appreciate these very complex values.

Her involvement in the community and her dedication and devotion to her students and the troops have earned her the utmost respect and admiration among all of us today.

Mrs. Kelly McDermott was sponsored by VFW Post 6208 in Prior Lake, Minnesota. We truly appreciate her hard work, and we will soon let her know that when she physically receives the plaque that the Adjutant General will now read.

ASSISTANT ADJUTANT GENERAL McNEILL: "National Citizenship Education Teacher Award, grade level 6-8, presented to Kelly McDermott, Hidden Oaks Middle School, 2012-2013." (Applause)

PRESENTATION OF THE TEACHER AWARD TO GEORGE ZORMAN, MOUNTAIN HOME HIGH SCHOOL

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF DeNOYER: It is with honor that I introduce you to the National Citizenship Education Teacher of the Year, representing grades 9-12, Mr. George "Bud" Zorman from Mountain Home Junior High School in Mountain Home, Arkansas.

Bud teaches ninth grade American History, but he doesn't just teach his students American History, he really shows it to them. Bud shows them American History every day when they walk in his classroom. He is one of few professional teachers who wears battle scars, and I am not talking about ones painted on for reenactments. Mr. Zorman served his country as a United States Marine. His students have the unique fortune of being

taught by a true American hero.

He knows firsthand what it means to be a patriot and knows what service means in the biggest of ways. Bud, before I continue, I just want to say thank you for your service. We are proud and honored to have you here today. (Applause)

Bud has been inspiring his students to learn and appreciate America's heritage and military history for many years. His enthusiasm for U.S. history is apparent in his teaching methods.

His knowledge and innovative teaching methods help bring textbooks to life and is a reflection of his hard work, dedication and passion for teaching our nation's youth.

Mr. Zorman's resourceful techniques enable him to demonstrate history to his students instead of merely telling it to them. Every year, Bud and his students take part in Revolutionary War reenactments where they make their own costumes, replicate weapons and write up a script to reenact a Revolutionary battle for the school and community. What better way to understand something than to actually act it out.

Bud also instills the importance of community patriotism and civic responsibility in his students by requiring them to complete ten hours of community service. In addition, he teaches them something VFW is very fond of, flag etiquette. He even has them participate in flag retirement ceremonies. This is a skill we find admirable in a member of the community and are so pleased to know he makes it a requirement in his classroom.

Bud has an array of unique methods to help teach his students about patriotism, military history and respect for veterans and active duty troops. He invites guest speakers to come to the class to talk on various topics relevant to American history. He has students conduct research papers on historical events in America; they pack care packages for the troops, create World War II tour of duty scrapbooks and compete in the VFW Voice of Democracy Audio-Essay Competition.

Bud isn't only an amazing teacher in the classroom at Mountain Home Junior High, he is still very active in the military community through ROTC programs, drill instructor programs, and in his membership with various veterans groups.

And it doesn't stop there. He leads a trip to Washington, D.C., every year for students who are interested in an educational adventure outside of school. He takes them to each of the war monuments and memorials and explains their significance in history. He also takes his students to Gettysburg for a firsthand walking tour of that monumental battlefield.

The knowledge he shares with his students will transcend generations, and they are indeed fortunate to have been taught by one of America's finest.

Please help me in welcoming Mr. George "Bud" Zorman, sponsored by VFW Post 3246 in Mountain Home, Arkansas. (Applause)

ASSISTANT ADJUTANT GENERAL McNEILL: "National Citizenship Education Teacher Award, grade level 9-12, presented to George 'Bud' Zorman, Mountain Home Junior High School, 2012-2013." (Applause)

RESPONSE – MR. GEORGE "BUD" ZORMAN

MR. ZORMAN: Semper Fi, Hoorah. I am so very honored to be here in your midst. That is first and foremost. This award is not for me, this award is

for my kids. They work hard. I facilitate, they make it happen. They learn. They are involved in the community. Our class mottos, freedom is not free; remember the fallen are those who serve and understand the true meaning and value of freedom.

These young people are our future. Where are we headed to? It is important that they know and understand where we have come from, how we got here, and where we might be headed to. I try to deliver that to them, not just through a textbook but through my actions. My students have seen me cry, and they have seen me laugh. I know them, I love them, and they know I do.

Some of the things that we do in class, we do a veterans program every year. We honor the local veterans, and we have them in our school. We do programs with the American Legion through their Oratorical Speech Contest, through the VFW, which I am a proud member from the State of Arkansas, Post 3246, Mountain Home, Arkansas.

We do flag etiquette and retirements. I teach them in addition to our class motto, sacrifice means absolutely nothing without remembrance. I will challenge you to remember that today.

My students also create their own weapons and costumes and participate in a Revolutionary War reenactment every year where we have about five or six horses galloping around. I have a good buddy of mine who shoots off his Civil War cannon for me, and we just have a great time and the students learn from that. They will never forget that as long as they live.

We contribute to the Marine Corps Toys for Tots. Last year, I am proud to say, my students alone raised \$10,000 for Toys for Tots. (Applause)

Myself and Master Chief Wilson, who is retired after 24 years in the United States Navy, run a military club as well to promote not only military services, but our patriotism and our civic virtues and responsibilities as American citizens. The kids contribute to food banks, they contribute to all kinds of volunteer hours. I was really shocked, to be honest with you, ten hours is required for part of their grade for my PE advanced students. I was really surprised that the majority do not stop at ten. Once they get involved, and they get involved in the community, I have some doing as many as 50 hours, folks, in one school year. (Applause)

Lastly, I would say that character of education is also a big part of what I try to instill in the students. We have something we call, very simply, just do the right thing. When I tell them just, the entire class will say, "do the right thing." Consider the consequences of your actions, and so forth.

You would be surprised how many of our young people unfortunately do not get that at home. I try and deliver that to them, not only through what I say, but through my actions and my deeds.

I am a proud retired United States Marine. I spent 21 years in the Marines. I sweated for this country, I have bled for this country, and I am so very honored to be here and receive this award. Thank you very much. (Applause)

PRESENTATION OF FRED C. HALL MEMORIAL OUTSTANDING POST PROJECT

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF DeNOYER: The VFW has a rich tradition associated with community service, working closely with many national organizations of similar commitments such as the Boy Scouts of America and the Freedom Foundation. The VFW also partners with the National Rifle Association, the U.S. Chamber of Commerce and other civic organizations in fostering community involvement.

Constructive community service is a founding VFW tenet with volunteerism benefiting education, the environment, health sciences, civic projects and the military. The VFW's Citizenship Education program is designed to stimulate an interest in America's history, its traditions and institutions, as well as promote patriotism. Today, I want to tell you about how VFW Post 7397 has been doing this so well within its community in Lenexa, Kansas, through its newest initiative to support the troops.

Imagine leaving the grocery store on a Sunday afternoon and recognizing the ever-recognizable yellow support, the troops ribbon car magnet lying on the ground of the parking lot. Maybe you would walk by, or maybe you would pick it up. Vietnam veteran and VFW Post 7397 member, Sid Linver bent down and picked it up wondering about the person who lost it when he noticed it was not as it appeared. It was an imitation of the ribbon in support of a local sports team. Linver was bothered and hurt by this cavalier misintention. But he was then inspired. He decided to do something to truly support the troops, realizing there are people out there who do not, or just as bad, give only lip service to the phrase "I Support the Troops."

Sid started a program called "Platoons Forward" that provides comfort to deployed troops in remote regions in Iraq and Afghanistan. These troops do not have access to facilities such as mess halls and Post exchanges. They are at least 50 miles out from the major bases guarding mountain passes and isolated villages. They are supplied by helicopter only which means ammunition and food are delivered first, while personal and comfort items come last.

Sid began this project at home and quickly moved it to the Post where the other Post 7397 and Auxiliary members eagerly joined in on the effort to support our remarkable service members.

VFW members know all too well that troops get homesick and believe sending items that remind them of home can make a big difference. "Platoons Forward" sends the items through the 1st Sergeant at each of the companies. They then provide the program with a wish list from the unit.

The program is something the entire community gets involved with. The Post works with the area Boy Scout groups, schools, the fire department, the police department and religious groups to collect the items on the unit's wish list. These groups also help pack everything to be shipped.

Since the program began in 2007, "Platoons Forward" has sent over 1,600 packages to nearly 20 different units shipping about 100 boxes out each month. The shipments contain necessary items like razors and shaving cream, boot socks and hand warmers. They also include a few comfort items the troops put on the wish list like current news magazines, popcorn, spices, nuts, and even toys to hand out to the local children.

The prestigious Fred C. Hall Memorial Outstanding Post Special Project

Award is designed to recognize VFW Posts for their unique and outstanding community service projects that are over and above what is expected of VFW units. We believe VFW Post 7397 is returning the troops an enormous service with their "Platoons Forward" program, and it is evident through the many thank you notes and personal letters sent to the Post from units who received packages.

Post 7397 and its Auxiliary serve as an inspiration to our members, the community and to America. We want to thank all the Post and Auxiliary members for their steadfast efforts in working with the community to provide the troops the comfort and support they deserve and need. Because of this, troops in isolated areas of the world, protecting America's freedom at this very moment, have faith in their country and know how much VFW and its communities cherish and appreciate their every move.

Please join me in presenting this Fred C. Hall Memorial Outstanding Post Special Project Award to Sidney Linver, Project Coordinator, representing the Isadore Hoehn Post 7397 in Lenexa, Kansas, for their "Platoons Forward" project. (Applause)

REMARKS – COMRADE SIDNEY LINVER

COMRADE SIDNEY LINVER (Post 7397 – Department of Kansas):
Good morning. Just a few words about "Platoons Forward", and a little background. In October 2007, 1st Sergeant Jim Norton, C Company, Second Battalion, 12th Infantry, sent VFW Post 7397 an email describing the life and the combat actions of his company stationed in Baghdad, Sadr City. He included a wish list. We really didn't know what that meant. In it were the things that his troops wanted, but more importantly needed.

Our Post mobilized the community literally. Every nook and cranny was looked into by the members of the Post, and they presented the wish list, which backed the shopping list, to various organization groups and individuals.

"Platoons Forward" was born. Over the past four and a half years, more than, and I have to correct this number, more than 4,000 care packages have gone to combat outposts in both Iraq and Afghanistan.

We are not unique, and ours is not a one-man show or even a one-Post show. Your Posts, each and every one of you, can join the "Platoons Forward" project. It is quite simple.

All you need is the APO address and the 1st Sergeant's email address. You might say how do I get that? Well, if all else fails look us up and we have got the list of those combat outposts, the APO address, and the email addresses of the 1st Sergeants.

Contact that 1st Sergeant, ask him, "what do you need, what do you want?" and start sending those care packages. You don't have to send a lot.

We started out with 25 boxes to one company, and now we are sending 150, 175 boxes to each of these companies that are in combat outposts.

Contact our Post, look us up, join us, and you, too, can support the troops. Thank you. (Applause)

INTRODUCTION – RICHARD CESLER, WASHINGTON STATE VETERANS CEMETERY

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF DeNOYER: Our next guest devotes himself to conducting research and collaborating with funeral homes, cemeteries, government officials and policymakers in order to ensure that the people who worked to protect the United States of America received dignified and distinguished burial services.

As the Director of the Washington State Veterans Cemetery, Richard Cesler's wholehearted mission is to assist the families of deceased veterans in finding and paying tribute to their fallen loved ones.

Rich served in the U.S. Air Force from 1966-1970, obtained the rank of Sergeant, and was honorably discharged as a disable Vietnam veteran. But many of us might not know that Rich was also a VFW Service Officer with the Idaho Department of Veterans Affairs from 2004 to 2005.

Mr. Cesler is a pioneer in locating and honoring forgotten veterans, and his undertakings have garnered him recognition from Americans who have loved and lost people they were close to, organizations that are devoted to tracing the whereabouts of the missing, and government networks that honor soldiers who are missing or who have been recently accounted for.

His efforts sparked the development of the Missing in America Project, which is now effective in 30 states. The project has led to the retrieval of more than 1,000 veterans' remains, and ensures they are given proper burials.

Please welcome the Director of the Washington State Veterans Cemetery, Richard Cesler. (Applause)

REMARKS – COMRADE RICHARD CESLER

COMRADE CESLER: Thank you, Commander-in-Chief. I would also like to thank Senior Vice Commander-in-Chief John Hamilton and our Junior Vice Commander-in-Chief for the opportunity to speak to you this morning.

In 2005, I was challenged. I had only become the Director at that time of the Idaho Veterans Cemetery. I had been there two weeks. Someone stood up in a meeting and asked me what I was doing about recovering veterans who were still sitting in funeral homes, in coroners' offices, medical examiners' offices around our nation, particularly in the State of Idaho.

I took that to heart, because I was appointed Director, so I took that responsibility to say I need to do something.

On the way from that meeting, I stopped by a funeral home, asked them if they had cremations or identified cremations of any veterans. They said, "Oh, yeah, we have six. They have been sitting here for over 16 years." It inspired me to look at this just a little bit further.

What it required was a release of liability for those people who participate in a program for that recovery. I came up with a concept of a Missing in America Project, the MIAP, and I began working with our state's legislatures. We wrote a law there in Idaho so we were able to recover them.

In 2006, we had the very first Missing in America Project inurnment at the Idaho State Veterans Cemetery for 21 veterans and a spouse. I was also very privileged to be asked to go to the State of Washington five years ago

to build a brand new Veterans Cemetery there.

I will tell you that it is complete. They are celebrating – not celebrating, they are experiencing close to their second thousand burials there.

I took that project to Washington State, worked with the State Legislatures. We wrote a law there, again to allow permission of the release of liability to participate in this program.

I will tell you that on September 10th of last year, we held a mass honors ceremony for 62 recovered veterans and two spouses. Since then, a nationwide project has taken hold, the MIAP, and there are many, many people out there that have come on board to do the research to help us find our brothers and our sisters.

How far back do they go? In Western Washington this year, we recovered a Civil War veteran, and he was buried at the Tahoma Cemetery at Camp Washington.

In Northern Idaho, we recovered 14 veterans. Two of them were World War I veterans who had been there over 40 years waiting for somebody to discover them.

There is a credo that we live by that we will leave no one behind, and we don't forget.

What I am telling you now is I need your help. We need your help through the Missing in America Project. I would challenge the other State Commanders, the Senior Vice and Junior Vice Commanders to come on board to do one thing this year, if you only do one thing right.

The VFW needs to get behind making sure that every state veterans legislative group proposes a law and that it gets passed in each state so that we can do this recovery of these veterans and spouses.

I had to point out to Senior Vice Commander-in-Chief Hamilton that in the State of Florida there is no law. There are 16 veterans that I know of right now that sit in Jacksonville, Florida, who can be released to be buried in the Jacksonville National Cemetery.

When I explained that to him, he said two words, the initials are B.S. "It is going to be taken care of." I am encouraged by that.

I am also encouraged that our incoming Commander-in-Chief, John Hamilton, has made it his mission, one of his projects this year to support. So, what I am asking all of you to do, comrades and sisters, is get behind your state legislative groups. Get the laws proposed this year, get them passed to release that liability for this recovery project.

They told you that we had recovered a thousand. I can tell you that that number is now over 3,000 abandoned veterans recovered.

I would just leave you with one story. At a District meeting in Coeur d'Alene, Idaho, the State Veterans Service Officer from Idaho handed me a set of remains and a flag. This is just one of a thousand stories, people. All it had on it was a name and a funeral home. We didn't know if it was a veteran or not.

How those came to be placed in his hands, there was an abandoned car on the side of the road. When he took that car in to detail it, they found a cremation and an American Flag sitting in the trunk. The story is that the fellow died in 2005 in Clarkston, Washington. His friend picked him up because he was indigent. He had no other family, and placed him in the trunk of his car, and there he sat until 2011 when he made his way to me.

That following month, within 15 minutes of the National Personnel Records Center, we identified this gentleman as a veteran who has the

privilege of being buried in the State Veterans Cemetery, our National Veterans Cemetery. We were privileged to do that.

Just one other quick story. There was a storage unit in Meridian, Idaho. When they opened that door to auction, they discovered the remains of an Army veteran named Richard Truman and his wife, Martha. The records were still there. This fellow received two Purple Hearts in Korea within six months of each other. There was no family to speak for him. The Missing in America Project, again we identified them and we placed them in the Veterans Cemetery. He is entitled to that. You are entitled to that.

With the population that we have right now and all the indigents that are out there, this problem doesn't go away. It gets exponentially larger and larger.

Our mission is to do the right thing. Our mission is to recover those veterans and give them the honors that they earned in service to our nation.

I ask you to join me to get those laws passed in your state so it will release the liability so we can find them, all of them. Thank you. (Applause)

...Convention Announcements...

INTRODUCTION OF PRESIDENT BARACK OBAMA

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF DeNOYER: It is now my honor to introduce someone who is no stranger to the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States or to the VFW National Convention stage.

He was born in Hawaii, raised with Midwestern values, and educated at Columbia and Harvard. He served in his State Senate for eight years before becoming a U.S. Senator from the Prairie State of Illinois in 2004.

He would co-sponsor numerous VFW-supported legislation like the Post-9/11 GI Bill and the Traumatic Injury Insurance Supplement for our seriously wounded Iraq and Afghanistan warriors.

He would attend the VFW Washington Office Legislative Conference Reception, and appear on this stage for two years in a row as a candidate for your nation's highest office.

Then he appeared before us again, after he got the job, in 2009, when he would exchange diplomatic notes with the Russian President to revitalize the U.S.-Russian Joint Commission on POW/MIAs, and would go on to sign into law another top VFW legislative priority – advanced appropriations for the Department of Veterans Affairs.

He said he would take care of veterans, service members and their families, and he has been true to his word.

And I would definitely be remiss to not add our profound appreciation for all the superlative work the First Lady and Dr. Jill Biden do for the troops and especially their families. Thanks to you, Mr. President and Vice-President Biden for these two extraordinary ladies.

And now, comrades and sisters and distinguished guests, please heartily welcome our 44th President of the United States, Barack Obama.

(Whereupon, the assembly extended a prolonged standing ovation.)

ADDRESS – PRESIDENT BARACK OBAMA

PRESIDENT OBAMA: Thank you so much. Please, please, everybody

have a seat.

Commander DeNoyer, thank you for your introduction, and for your service in Vietnam and on behalf of America's veterans. I want to thank your Executive Director, Bob Wallace; your next Commander, who I look forward to working with, John Hamilton. And to Gwen Rankin, Leanne Lemley, and the entire Ladies Auxiliary, thank you for your patriotic service to America.

I stand before you as our hearts still ache over the tragedy in Aurora, Colorado. Yesterday, I was in Aurora, with families whose loss is hard to imagine, with the wounded, who are fighting to recover; with a community and a military base in the midst of their grief. And they told me of the loved ones they lost. And here today, it's fitting to recall those who wore our nation's uniform:

Staff Sergeant Jesse Childress, an Air Force Reservist, 29 years old, a Cyber Specialist who loved sports, the kind of guy, said a friend, who would help anybody.

Petty Officer 3rd Class John Larimer, 27 years old, who, like his father and grandfather before him, joined the Navy, and who is remembered as an outstanding shipmate.

Rebecca Wingo, 32 years old, a veteran of the Air Force, fluent in Chinese, who served as a translator; a mother, whose life will be an inspiration to her two little girls.

And Jonathan Blunk, from Reno, just 26 years old, but a veteran of three Navy tours, whose family and friends will always know that in that theater he gave his own life to save another.

These young patriots were willing to serve in faraway lands, yet they were taken from us here at home. And yesterday I conveyed to their families a message on behalf of all Americans: We honor your loved ones. We salute their service. And as you summon the strength to carry on and keep bright their legacy, we stand with you as one united American family. (Applause)

Veterans of Foreign Wars, in you I see the same shining values, the virtues that make America great. When our harbor was bombed and fascism was on the march, when the fighting raged in Korea and Vietnam, when our country was attacked on that clear September morning, when our forces were sent to Iraq, you answered your country's call. Because you know what Americans must always remember, our nation only endures because there are patriots who protect it.

In the crucible of battle, you were tested in ways the rest of us will never know. You carry in your hearts the memory of the comrades you lost. For you understand that we must honor our fallen heroes not just on Memorial Day, but all days. And when an American goes missing, or is taken prisoner, we must do everything in our power to bring them home. (Applause)

Even after you took off the uniform, you never stopped serving. You took care of each other, fighting for the benefits and care you had earned. And you have taken care of the generations that followed, including our newest veterans from Iraq and Afghanistan. On behalf of all our men and women in uniform, and on behalf of the American people, I want to thank you, VFW. Thank you for your outstanding work. (Applause)

Of course, some among you, our Vietnam veterans, didn't always receive that thanks, at least not on time. This past Memorial Day, I joined

some of you at The Wall to begin the 50th Anniversary of the Vietnam War. And it was another chance to see what should have been done all along: You did your duty, and you made us proud. And as the 50th Anniversary continues, I would ask all Vietnam vets to stand, or raise your hand, as we say: "Thank you and welcome home." (Applause)

Every generation among you served to keep us strong and free. And it falls to us, those that followed, to preserve what you won. Four years ago I stood before you at a time of great challenge for our nation. We were engaged in two wars. Al-Qaeda was entrenched in their safe havens in Pakistan. Many of our alliances were frayed. Our standing in the world had suffered. We were in the worst recession of our lifetimes. Around the world, some questioned whether the United States still had the capacity to lead.

So, four years ago I made you a promise. I pledged to take the fight to our enemies, and renew our leadership in the world. As President, that's what I have done. And as you reflect on recent years, as we look ahead to the challenges we face as a nation and the leadership that's required, you don't have just my words, you have my deeds. You have my track record. You have the promises that I have made and the promises that I have kept. I pledged to end the war in Iraq honorably, and that's what we have done. (Applause)

After I took office, we removed nearly 150,000 U.S. troops from Iraq. And some said that bringing our troops home last year was a mistake. They would have kept tens of thousands of our forces in Iraq indefinitely, without a clear mission. Well, when you are Commander-in-Chief you owe the troops a plan, you owe the country a plan, and that includes recognizing not just when to begin wars but also how to end them.

So we brought our troops home responsibly. They left with their heads held high, knowing they gave Iraqis a change to forge their own future. And today, there are no Americans fighting in Iraq, and we are proud of all the Americans who served there. (Applause)

I pledge to make it a priority to take out the terrorists who have attacked us on 9/11. And as a candidate, I said that if we had Osama bin Laden in our sights, we would act to keep America safe, even if it meant going into Pakistan. Some of you remember, at the time, that comment drew quite a bit of criticism. But since I took office, we have worked with our allies and our partners to take off more top al-Qaeda leaders than any time since 9/11. And thanks to the courage and the skill of our forces, Osama bin Laden will never threaten America again, and al-Qaeda is on the road to defeat. (Applause)

I pledge to finish the job in Afghanistan. After years of drift, we had to break the momentum of the Taliban, and build up the capacity and the capability of Afghans. And so, working with our commanders, we came up with a new strategy, and we ordered additional forces to get the job done. This is still a tough fight. But thanks to the incredible services and sacrifices of our troops, we pushed the Taliban back; we are training Afghan forces; we have begun the transition to Afghan lead.

Again, there are those who argued against a timeline for ending this war, or against talking about it publicly. But you know what, that's not a plan for America's security either. After ten years of war, and given the progress we've made, I felt it was important that the American people — and our men and women in uniform — know our plan to end this war

responsibly. And so by the end of this summer, more than 30,000 of our troops will have come home. Next year, Afghans will take the lead for their own security. In 2014, the transition will be complete. And even as our troops come home, we will have a strong partnership with the Afghan people, and we will stay vigilant so Afghanistan is never again a source for attacks against America. (Applause)

We are not just ending these wars; we are doing it in a way that achieves our objectives. Moreover, it's allowed us to broaden our vision and begin a new era of American leadership. We are leading from Europe to the Asia Pacific, with alliances that have never been stronger. We are leading the fight against nuclear dangers. We've applied the strongest sanctions ever on Iran and North Korea, nations that cannot be allowed to threaten the world with nuclear weapons. (Applause) We are leading on behalf of freedom, standing with people in the Middle East and North America as they demand their rights; protecting the Libyan people as they rid the world of Muammar Gaddafi.

Today, we are also working for a transition so the Syrian people can have a better future, free of the Assad regime. And given the regime's stockpiles of chemical weapons, we will continue to make it clear to Assad and those around him that the world is watching, and that they will be held accountable by the international community and the United States, should they make the tragic mistake of using those weapons. And we will continue to work with our friends and our allies and the Syrian opposition on behalf of the day when the Syrian people have a government that respects their basic rights to live in peace and freedom and dignity.

Because we are leading around the world, people have a new attitude toward America. There is more confidence in our leadership. We see it everywhere we go. We saw it as grateful Libyans waved American flags. We see it across the globe, when people are asked, which country do you admire the most, one nation comes out on top, the United States of America. (Applause)

So this is the progress that we have made. Thanks to the extraordinary service of our men and women in uniform, we are winding down a decade of war; we are destroying the terrorist network that attacked us; we are strengthening the alliances that extend our values. And today, every American can be proud that the United States is safer and stronger and more respected in the world.

And all this allows us to fulfill another promise that I made to you four years ago, strengthening our military. After ten years of operations, our soldiers will now have fewer and shorter deployments, which means more time on the home front to keep their families strong; more time to heal from the wounds of war; more time to improve readiness and prepare for future threats.

As President, I have continued to make historic investments to keep our armed forces strong. And guided by our new defense strategy, we will maintain our military superiority. It will be second to none as long as I am President and well into the future. We have got the best-trained, best-led, best-equipped military in history. And as Commander-in-Chief, I am going to keep it that way. (Applause)

And, by the way, given all the rhetoric lately – it is political season – let's always set the record straight on the budget. Those big, across-the-board cuts, including defense, that Congress said would occur next year

if they couldn't reach a deal to reduce the deficit? Let's understand, first of all, there is no reason that should happen, because people in Congress ought to be able to come together and agree on a plan, a balanced approach that reduces the deficit and keeps our military strong. It should be done. (Applause)

And there are a number of Republicans in Congress who don't want you to know that most of them voted for these cuts. Now they are trying to wriggle out of what they agreed to. Instead of making tough choices to reduce the deficit, they would rather protect tax cuts for some of the wealthiest Americans, even if it risks big cuts in our military. And I have got to tell you, VFW, I disagree. If the choice is between tax cuts that the wealthiest Americans don't need and funding our troops that we definitely need to keep our country strong, I will stand for our troops every single time. (Applause)

So let's stop playing politics with our military. Let's get serious and reduce our deficit and keep our military strong. Let's take some of the money that we've saved because we are not fighting in Iraq and because we are winding down in Afghanistan, use half of that money to pay down our deficit; let's use half of it to do some nation-building here in the United States of America.

Let's keep taking care of our extraordinary military families. For the first time ever, we have made military families and veterans a top priority, not just at DoD, not just at the VA, but across the government. As Richard mentioned, this has been a mission for my wife, Michelle, and Vice-President Joe Biden's wife, Dr. Jill Biden. Today, more people across America and every segment of society are joining forces to give our military families the respect and the support that they deserve. (Applause)

And there is another way we can honor those who serve. It may no longer be a crime for con artists to pass themselves off as heroes, but one thing is certain, it is contemptible. So this week, we will launch a new website, a living memorial, so the American people can see who's been awarded our nation's highest honors. Because no American hero should ever have their valor stolen. (Applause)

This leads me to another promise I made four years ago, upholding America's sacred trust with our veterans. I promised to strengthen the VA, and that promise has been kept. In my first year, we achieved the largest percentage increase in the VA budget in 30 years. And we are going to keep making historic investments in our veterans. When Richard came to the Oval Office, we talked about those automatic budget cuts, sequestration, could mean for the VA. So my administration has made it clear: Your veteran's benefits are exempt from sequestration. They are exempt. And because advance appropriations is now the law of the land, veterans' health care is protected from the budget battles in Washington. (Applause)

I promised you that I would stand up for veterans' health care. As long as I am President I will not allow VA health care to be turned into a voucher system, subject to the whims of the insurance market. Some have argued for this plan. I could not disagree more. You don't need vouchers, you need the VA health care that you have earned and that you depend on. (Applause)

So, we have made dramatic investments to help care for our veterans. For our Vietnam veterans, we declared that more illnesses are now

presumed connected to your exposure to Agent Orange. As a result of our decision, Vietnam-era vets and your families received nearly \$4 billion in disability pay. You needed it, you fought for it. We heard you and we got it done. (Applause)

We have added mobile clinics for our rural veterans; more tailored care for our women veterans; unprecedented support for veterans with traumatic brain injury. All tolled, we have made VA health care available to nearly 800,000 veterans who didn't have it before. And we are now supporting caregivers and families with the skills and the stipends to help care for the veterans that they love. (Applause)

Of course, more veterans in the system means more claims. So we have hired thousands of claim processors. We are investing in paperless systems. To their credit, the dedicated folks at the VA are now completing one million claims a year. But there is not a tidal wave of new claims. And when I hear about veterans waiting months, or years, for your benefits, it is unacceptable. And we are doing something about it. (Applause)

We are taking all those folks who processed your Agent Orange claims, more than 1,200 experts, and giving them a new mission: Attack the backlog. We are prioritizing veterans with the most serious disabilities. And the VA and DoD will work harder towards a seamless transition so new veterans aren't just piled on to the backlog. And we will not rest – I will not be satisfied until we get this right. And today, I am also calling on all those who help our veterans complete their claims, state VAs, physicians and veteran groups like the VFW, to join us. You know how this can work better, so let's get it done, together.

We are also focused on the urgent needs of our veterans with PTSD. We have poured tremendous resources into this fight, thousands of more counselors and more clinicians, more care and more treatment. And we have made it easier for veterans with PTSD to qualify for VA benefits. But after a decade of war, it's now an epidemic. We are losing more troops to suicide, one every single day, than we are in combat. According to some estimates, about 18 veterans are taking their lives each day, more every year than all the troops killed in Iraq and Afghanistan combined. That's a tragedy. It's heartbreaking. It should not be happening in the United States of America.

So when I hear about service members and veterans who had the courage to seek help but didn't get it, who died waiting, that's an outrage. And I have told Secretary Panetta, Chairman Dempsey and Secretary Shinseki we have got to do better. This has to be all hands on deck.

So our message to everyone who's ever worn the uniform, if you are hurting, it's not a sign of weakness to seek help, it is a sign of strength. And when you do, we will be there and do more to help, including more counselors and clinicians to help you heal. We need to end this tragedy, VFW. (Applause) And we are going to work together to make it happen.

So, too, with our campaign to end homelessness among our veterans. We have now helped to bring tens of thousands of veterans on the streets and into permanent housing. This has to be a core mission, because every veteran who has fought for America ought to have a home in America. (Applause)

And this brings me to the last promise I want to discuss with you. Four years ago, I said that I would do everything I could to help our veterans realize the American dream, to enlist you in building a strong America.

After all, our veterans have the skills that America needs. So today, our economy is growing and creating jobs, but it is still too hard for too many folks to find work, especially our younger veterans, our veterans from Iraq and Afghanistan. And with a million more troops rejoining civilian life in the years ahead, and looking for work, we have got to step up our game at every stage of their careers.

So today, I am announcing a major overall of our Transition Assistance Program. We are going to set up a kind of “reverse boot camp” for our departing service members. Starting this year, they will get more personalized assistance as they plan their careers. We will provide the training they need to find that job, or pursue that education, or start that business. And just as they have maintained their military readiness, we have new standards of “career readiness.”

In addition, by making the Post-9/11 GI Bill a priority, we have helped more than 800,000 veterans and their families pursue their education. And I have issued an executive order to help put a stop to schools that are ripping off our veterans. (Applause)

I have directed the federal government to step up on jobs. Since I took office, we have hired more than 200,000 veterans into the federal government. We made it a priority, and we are keeping track, every agency, every department: What are you doing for our veterans?

I have challenged community health centers to hire thousands of veterans as physicians and nurses. And as we help local communities hire new police officers and firefighters and first responders, we are giving a preference to veterans.

We are also fighting to get more vets hired in the private sector. With new tools like our online Veterans Jobs Bank, we are connecting veterans directly to jobs. We are helping thousands of veterans get certified for good-paying jobs in manufacturing. We succeed in passing tax credits for businesses that hire our veterans and our wounded warriors. And this morning, I signed into law the Veterans Skills to Jobs Act, making it easier for veterans to transfer their outstanding military skills into the licenses and credentials they need to get civilian jobs. (Applause)

If you are a young man that is in charge of a platoon or millions of dollars of equipment and are taking responsibility, or you are a medic out in the field who is saving lives every single day, when you come home, you need to be credentialed and certified quickly so you can get on the job. People should understand how skilled you are. And there shouldn't be bureaucrats or run-arounds. We've got to put these folks to work. (Applause)

Last summer, I also challenged the private sector to hire or train 100,000 veterans or their spouses. Michelle and Jill Biden have been leading the effort through Joining Forces. And so far, thousands of patriotic businesses have hired or trained more than 90,000 veterans and spouses. And our message to companies is simple: If you want somebody who can get the job done, then hire a vet. Hire a vet. Hire a vet and they will make you proud just like they made America proud. (Applause)

And we are fighting for veterans who want to start their own businesses, including more training and entrepreneurship. It is one of the reasons we have cut taxes 18 times for small businesses, including veteran-owned business. And the effects ripple out, because vets are more likely to hire vets.

So today, we can point to progress. More veterans are finding jobs; the unemployment rate for veterans has come down. Yes, it is still too high, but it is coming down. And now we have got to sustain the momentum. It is one of the reasons I have proposed to congress a Veterans Job Corps to put our veterans back to work protecting and rebuilding America. And today I am again calling on Congress: Pass this Veterans Job Corps and extend the tax credits for businesses that hire veterans so we can give these American heroes the jobs and opportunities that they deserve. (Applause)

So, VFW, these are the promises that I made. These are the promises that I have kept. Where we still have more to do, we will not rest. That's my vow to you. I have got your back. I have got your six. Because we have a solemn obligation to all who serve, not just for the years you are in uniform, but all the decades that follow, and because even though today's wars are ending, the hard work of taking care of our newest veterans has only just begun.

Just as you protected America, we are going to pass our country to the next generation, stronger and safer and more respected in the world. So if anyone tries to tell you that our greatest has passed, that America is in decline, you tell them this: Just like the 20th Century, the 21st is going to be another great American century. For we are Americans, blessed with the greatest form of government ever devised by man, a democracy dedicated to freedom and committed to the ideals that still light the world. We will never apologize for our way of life; we will never waver in its defense.

We are a nation that freed millions and turned adversaries into allies. We are the Americans who defended the peace and turned back aggression. We are the Americans who welcome our global responsibilities and our global leadership. The United States has been and will remain the one indispensable nation in world affairs.

And you, you are the soldiers, the sailors, the airmen, the Marines and the Coast Guardsmen who have kept us strong. We will honor your legacy. And we will ensure that the military you served and the America that we love, remains the greatest force for freedom that the world has ever known.

God bless you, God bless all of our veterans, and God bless the United States of America.

(Whereupon, the assembly extended a prolonged rising ovation.)

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF DeNOYER: At this time, we will recess until 2:30 o'clock p.m.

(Whereupon, the meeting was duly recessed at 1:30 o'clock p.m., to reconvene at 2:30 o'clock p.m.)

FIRST BUSINESS SESSION
MONDAY AFTERNOON, JULY 23, 2012

(The First Business Session of the 113th National Convention of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States was called to order in the Reno/Sparks Convention Center, Reno, Nevada, at 2:30 o'clock p.m., by Commander-in-Chief DeNoyer.)

CALL TO ORDER

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF DeNOYER: Comrades, if you will take your seats. We are going to get started right now. Thank you.

PRESENTATION OF CERTIFICATE OF APPRECIATION TO THE 112th
NATIONAL CONVENTION COMMITTEE

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF DeNOYER: It is now my distinct pleasure to present a Certification of Appreciation to the 112th National Convention Committee for their work in planning and conducting last year's very successful National Convention in San Antonio.

Here to accept the award on behalf of the Committee is Glen Gardner, Past Commander-in-Chief and the Convention Committee Chairman for the 112th National Convention.

ADJUTANT GENERAL KENT: "Certificate of Appreciation presented to the 112th National Convention Committee in extraordinary appreciation and eminent recognition of its outstanding dedication and persistent drive to ensure the success of the 112th National Convention of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States held in San Antonio, Texas, August 29-September 1, 2011.

"In Witness Whereof, we have hereunto set our hands and the official seal of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, this 23rd day of July, 2012."

Signed by Richard L. DeNoyer, Commander-in-Chief, and Allen "Gunner" Kent, Adjutant General. (Applause)

REPORT ON CONVENTION CREDENTIALS

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF DeNOYER: I will now request that Betty Gripp give us the official Convention Credentials Report.

COMRADE BETTY GRIPP (Post 10188 - Arizona): Good afternoon, Commander-in-Chief, Council members and delegates to the 113th National Convention. At the close of business 4:00 p.m. yesterday, July 22nd, 2012, the total delegates registering their credentials are:

Delegates 8,708. Total Department Commanders, 47. Total Past Commanders-in-Chief, 24. Total National Officers, 36. The grand total is 8,815. Total registered for the 113th National Convention, 2,157. This is my report.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF DeNOYER: Thank you, Betty. I appreciate it very much.

Next, we will have the report on Convention Rules by its Chairman, Cliff G. Olson.

REPORT ON CONVENTION RULES

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF OLSON: Good afternoon, comrades. Are you all awake? Good. Thank you, Commander, and I would like to introduce the Committee on Convention Rules. We have a large Committee, so pay attention. They are Past Commander-in-Chief Tom Pouliot and myself, Cliff Olson. I will read them off and there will be a few, folks, for you to accept or reject.

This is the report of the Committee on Convention Rules to the 113th National Convention of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States.

The Committee on Convention Rules met Sunday, July 22, 2012, and agreed on the following recommended rules, which I will respectfully submit for your consideration.

1. That, in accordance and conjunction with the National By-Laws and Manual of Procedure, and with any exceptions noted below, Demeter's Manual shall be recognized as parliamentary authority for this Convention.

2. That when a registered delegate desires to make a motion or address the Convention, he or she shall rise, address the Chair as "Comrade Commander-in-Chief," and after being recognized, shall state his or her name, his Post number and his Department before proceeding.

3. A registered delegate shall be permitted to speak but twice on any one subject, or any pending resolution for a period not to exceed five minutes each, except by consent of two-thirds of the voting strength of the convention present; provided; that, the chairmen of Convention committees may speak as frequently as necessary in connection with reports of their committees. In the event of controversy, the presiding officer shall not entertain any motion which will curtail further debate without affording the maker of the motion or a member of the particular group presenting the resolution an opportunity for five minutes of final rebuttal.

4. All resolutions offered by individual registered delegates must bear the endorsement of the Department Commander or, if absent, the Department Adjutant. All resolutions must be submitted to the office of the Adjutant General for numbering and referral to committee no later than 4:30 p.m. Tuesday, July 24, 2012, and must be accompanied by a written explanation as to why the resolution was not presented to the Department Convention for consideration.

5. All resolutions offered on the floor at the Convention, shall initially be in writing, and shall automatically and without reading, be referred to the Adjutant General for assignment to the proper committee.

6. Committee Chairmen, in reporting on resolutions referred to their committee, shall first read those resolutions on which favorable action is recommended. Specific resolutions may be set aside for individual action at the request of any delegate, the others being voted upon collectively. After action has been taken on all such resolutions, the chairman shall read the number and title of those resolutions which the committee has disapproved. A resolution disapproved by the committee shall be automatically rejected unless a motion is made and seconded that it be approved, in which case it shall be brought up for debate and Convention action.

7. This Convention will not consider any resolution dealing with race, creed or religion, or endorse anyone for public office. No resolution

will be considered on the expenditure or appropriation of organizational funds.

8. The Convention will not consider any resolution endorsing legislation sponsored by any other veterans organization, or requesting us to join with any other organization in sponsoring legislation not expressly proposed by the members of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States.

9. No person not a duly registered delegate or member of the National Convention shall participate in debate, directly or indirectly, on any subject before the Convention.

10. Unit rule of voting is not allowed.

I will let my co-chairman address the rest of them.

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF POULIOT: I am Past Commander-in-Chief Thomas Pouliot and I am co-chairman of the Committee.

11. Voting strength shall be determined by those delegates registered as of the close of the credential registration booth the previous day and as reported to the National Convention. The Department Commanders will receive, prior to the beginning of each business session, a list of Posts that have properly registered delegates. Only delegates representing those Posts listed on the report will be accorded voting privileges.

12. On roll calls, the Department Commanders of each delegation shall poll his delegation's registered delegates on the floor and shall announce the vote of his delegation.

13. Registered delegates of a delegation may arrive at a vote in any manner, but shall announce it in terms of full units and not in terms of a fractional part of a vote.

14. Reconsideration of a motion or resolution upon which final disposition has been made shall not be allowed after the session at which it was acted on has been recessed, or adjourned, unless the body is notified of such contemplated action prior to the close of that session.

15. When the report of the Department Commander of the delegation is not acceptable to all registered delegates of the delegation and a poll of the Department registered delegates is demanded by three registered delegates of said Department, the Adjutant General shall poll the registered delegates, without discussion of question.

16. In accordance with Section 621 of the National By-Laws, voting shall be by acclamation, except when a roll call be demanded by ten registered delegates representing Posts in ten separate Departments, or by order of the Commander-in-Chief.

17. Nominating speeches for the National Officers shall be limited to five minutes each. The time allocated to encompass all seconding speeches shall be limited to four minutes total. Nomination and election of National Officers will be held according to the Congressional Charter, By-Laws, and Section 617 of the National Manual of Procedure.

18. Registered delegates and persons recognized by the Chair shall be entitled to a respectful hearing, and the Chair shall have the authority to clear the gallery or the floor or have the Sergeant-at-Arms escort from the floor any person or persons who may create any disturbances which interfere with the orderly procedure of the Convention.

19. Consent of two-thirds of the voting strength of the Convention present is necessary for suspension of the rules of this Convention.

Those are the proposed rules.

I move the adoption of these recommended Convention Rules.

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF OLSON: I second the motion.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF DeNOYER: We have a motion made and a second. On the question; on the question; on the question. All in favor will say "aye"; all opposed. The "ayes" have it.

Next will be the report of the Committee on Finance and Internal Organization Resolutions by its Chairman, Past Commander-in-Chief Paul Spera.

REPORT OF COMMITTEE ON FINANCE AND INTERNAL ORGANIZATION

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF PAUL SPERA: Thank you, Comrade Commander-in-Chief. First, let me thank you for the appointment to this Committee as the Chairman, and to apologize for the fact that my co-chairman is not here, Past Commander-in-Chief Richard Eubank. Past Commander-in-Chief Eubank hurt his leg and he is laid up with that, and won't be able to be here.

The Committee met yesterday. We had four resolutions that we dealt with. We discussed them, we voted on them, and we have recommendations for them this morning. I would like to go through them at this time.

Resolution 201, I will read the Resolved.

"Be It Resolved, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that the current Membership program be abolished, the Commander-in-Chief sponsor a by-law amendment to delete Paragraph (a)(13) from Article VI, Section 618, and relinquish all authority pertaining thereto; and

"Be It Further Resolved, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that the Commander-in-Chief create a joint committee of National, Department and Post Officers to develop a New Membership Program, and to facilitate the creation of the VFW Marketing Department, which will report directly to the Adjutant General. This Department will be solely responsible for the implementation and day-to-day management of the New Membership Program; to be voted on by the members of the National Convention no later than the close of the 114th National Convention, and put into action at the beginning of the 2013-2014 membership year."

It was submitted by the Department of Oregon.

Resolution 202 is exactly the same as 201, and it was submitted by the Department of West Virginia. It was recommended rejection.

The Membership Program is a core element of the goals and objectives of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, and it is generally drafted each year by the Commander-in-Chief and administered by the Adjutant General. This resolution proposes that the current Membership Program be abolished and that a new Membership Program be created by a Committee appointed by the Commander-in-Chief that would consist of representatives from the National, Department and Post Officers.

It further proposes that a new VFW Marketing Department be created that would solely be responsible for implementation and the day-to-day management of the new Membership Program.

Under Section 618, Officers, Duties and Obligations, Paragraph (a) (10), the Commander-in-Chief shall assure that the Adjutant General and all other officers, Committee Chairmen, Committee members and

employees appointed by the Commander-in-Chief perform their respective duties in accordance with these by-laws. Therefore, the responsibility for the integrity of the Membership Program, whether developed by the Commander-in-Chief or a Committee, continues to reside with the Commander-in-Chief.

If the Commander-in-Chief would like to create a Committee to advise on changes to the Membership Program, he or she may do so, but it should not be a mandate.

Further, to create a new VFW Marketing Department that would solely be responsible for the implementation and the day-to-day management of the Membership Program would be redundant.

Since a fully-staffed Membership Department, which includes a marketing initiative under the direction of the Deputy Director currently exists for that primary purpose, it was the feeling of the Committee that both of these resolutions, 201 and 202, be rejected.

Resolution No. 203, I will read the "Be It Resolved."

"Be It Resolved, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that the Commander-in-Chief sponsor a By-Law Amendment that will abolish Article XIII, the Men's Auxiliary, and include agreed-upon eligibility changes to Article XI, Section 1102, to be voted on by the members of the National Convention no later than the close of the 117th National Convention."

The recommendation for this resolution was rejected. The Commander-in-Chief should not be mandated to take action to extending the Men's Auxiliary, which this resolution proposes, particularly when it is based on proposed actions be considered by the Ladies Auxiliary that as proposed will not have any effect on the current structure of the Men's Auxiliary.

It was the feeling of the Committee to recommend rejection.

Resolution 204, "Be It Resolved, the Manual of Procedure mirror the Ladies Auxiliary Article XI, Section 1101-1104; and

"Be It Further Resolved, that any Department that does not currently have a Men's Auxiliary will not be required to form them."

I am going to read the "Whereases" on this, because the "Be It Resolved" does not cover the information you need to have.

"Whereas, the Men's Auxiliary to the Veterans of Foreign Wars is an association of the eligible members chartered by the Department to which it is assigned per Article XIII, Men's Auxiliary, be allowed to form Districts and Departments; and

"Whereas, the Departments who wish to charter a Men's Auxiliary be allowed to form Districts in their Department. Such Districts shall align with the Department District boundaries and numbers. No Auxiliary to the District of the Veterans of Foreign Wars shall be formed unless approved at a regular or special meeting and approved by two-thirds of the members of the Posts in the District."

The recommendation for this resolution was rejection. This resolution actually proposes the formation of a Men's Auxiliary at the Department level. This, in essence, means a formation of a National staff to oversee and support the mission and program of a Department Men's Auxiliary that would essentially create an impossibility to implement without significant additional resources being committed.

It is illogical to do this at this time considering less than 40 percent of our Departments currently have a viable Men's Auxiliary program

functioning presently just at the Post level. The Departments that have a functioning Men's Post Auxiliaries must realize that if this resolution passes and such units are created at the Department level, all dues currently being collected by Departments will be diverted in the future to those Men's Auxiliary Departments to support their programs.

Indeed, to date there has been no convincing case made that what we have now isn't working, or won't work and thus must be changed. The structure we have now was designed to meet the expressed needs articulated by its proponents, and that simply was to help Posts.

In almost ten years of existence, there has not been significant growth in the Men's Auxiliary members suggesting the demand is not there to now create Men's Auxiliary Departments.

Finally, the Men's Auxiliary was created at the Post level because it was felt that having such units would aid in recruiting or filling the void of the aging members in those Posts. We don't follow how that reason can now be attached to the District and Departments.

In conclusion, the total number of active units and Departments with chartered units does not warrant expansion at this time to the Department level, and it cannot be implemented by simply transposing our current by-laws for the Ladies Auxiliary as the resolution directs.

It was the Committee's decision to recommend rejection. That concludes my four resolutions, Comrade Commander-in-Chief.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF DeNOYER: Thank you very much, Paul. I appreciate it. Are there any motions on any of these resolutions?

Microphone No. 1.

COMRADE DON YOUNG: Comrade Commander-in-Chief, Don Young, VFW Post 3466, West Virginia. I respectfully request that 203 be set aside.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF DeNOYER: Are you making a motion to adopt?

COMRADE DON YOUNG (Post 3466 – West Virginia): Yes.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF DeNOYER: Okay. Please do so.

COMRADE DON YOUNG (Post 3466 – West Virginia): Commander-in-Chief, I respectfully move that Resolution 203 be adopted.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF DeNOYER: Thank you. Do I have a second? Do I have a second? Do I have a second?

COMRADE JAMES TALERICO: Comrade Commander-in-Chief, I am Jim Talerico, Post 573, West Virginia. I second the motion.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF DeNOYER: We have a motion made and seconded. The motion is to adopt the — I am going to let you read the motion so they understand what it is they are voting on.

PARLIAMENTARIAN FRITZ MIHELIC: We have a motion and a second to adopt Resolution 203, "The Auxiliary of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States."

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF DeNOYER: On the question; on the question; on the question. All in favor will say "aye"; those opposed. The "nays" have it.

Are there any other motions to any other Resolutions? There being none that concludes the report of the Committee on Finance and Internal Organization.

Next is the Committee on By-Laws, Manual of Procedure and Ritual. The Chairman is Larry W. Rivers, Past Commander-in-Chief.

REPORT OF COMMITTEE ON NATIONAL BY-LAWS, MANUAL OF PROCEDURE AND RITUAL

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF LARRY RIVERS: Commander-in-Chief, thank you very much. I am honored to have the opportunity to serve as the Chairman of this distinguished Committee, along with my Vice-Chairman Glen Gardner. We appreciate very much your confidence in us.

I am pleased to report to the body that our Committee met at 2:00 o'clock yesterday afternoon, and had some very spirited debate on some very interesting by-law changes, and we have recommendations to bring before this body.

I would ask everybody to break out their 113th National Convention Veterans of Foreign Wars Proposed By-Laws, Manual of Procedure and Ritual Amendments. That was the little booklet that was in your registration packet.

In keeping with our Convention Rules, we will follow the procedure. I will read the recommendations of the Committee for approval, and I will read that slowly and you can follow along with these. I will read those numbers slowly, and I would ask you to just wait until I finish reading all of the Resolutions that the Committee recommends for approval. If at that time you have any opposition, then you can stand up and ask the Commander-in-Chief to set that particular Resolution aside.

The Convention Rules say that we vote as a block. The ones that are not set aside we will vote on those and accept the recommendation of the Committee, which means we approve those. The ones that are set aside, the Commander-in-Chief will then open the floor for debate, and we will vote on those individually. After we complete that process, we will read again the title of the ones that the Committee recommends for rejection.

If you want to adopt one of those, go to the microphone, and state I move approval of so and so, and that will be set aside for the discussion as well.

I will read slowly. Commander-in-Chief, the By-Laws Committee recommends approval of the following:

B-1; B-3; M-1; B-4; M-2; B-5; B-6; M-3; B-7; M-4; M-6; M-7; B-8; M-8; M-10; M-11; B-10; B-11; M-13; M-14; B-12; M-16; M-17; B-14; B-16; B-17; B-18; B-19; B-21; M-18; M-19; R-1 and R-2.

Commander-in-Chief, I move adoption of those recommended changes to the By-Laws and Manual of Procedure.

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF GARDNER: I am Glen Gardner, a delegate from Post 3359, Texas. I second the motion, Commander-in-Chief.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF DeNOYER: We have a motion made and seconded. Are there any set asides?

Microphone No. 1.

COMRADE VICTOR FUENTEALBA: Comrade Commander-in-Chief, I am Victor Fuentealba, a delegate from Post 9083, Baltimore, Maryland. I request that B-8 and B-11 be set aside.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF DeNOYER: Are there any further set asides?

COMRADE JOE ORLANDO: Comrade Commander-in-Chief, Joe Orlando, a delegate from Post 5941, New Jersey. I make a motion that M-16 be set aside, sir.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF DeNOYER: Microphone No. 3.

COMRADE RONALD RUSAKIEWICZ: Comrade Commander-in-Chief,

I am Ron Rusakiewicz, Post 9460, Stratford, Connecticut. I request M-11 and M-14 be set aside.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF DeNOYER: Microphone No. 1.

COMRADE DAVID BUTTERS: Comrade Commander-in-Chief, David Butters, VFW Post 475, a delegate, requests that B-2 be set aside.

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF RIVERS: Dave, we did not recommend adoption of B-2, so you will have to wait until we get to the rejected ones, and then move for adoption.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF DeNOYER: Are there any further set asides? Now, we are going to vote on the ones not set aside. On the question; on the question; on the question. All in favor will signify by the voting sign of "aye"; opposed "nay". The "ayes" have it.

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF RIVERS: Comrades, let's begin. The first requested set aside was B-8. I will read the staff recommendation. Let me find it right quick. Also, B-8 needs to be taken in tandem with M-10. I don't think anybody set aside M-10. We will discuss this and we will deal with that later.

I will read very quickly B-8. "Article II – Posts, Section 216 – Elected and Appointed Officers; Chairmen and Committees.

"Amend Section 216 – Elected and Appointed Officers; Chairmen and Committees; National By-Laws by replacing with the following:

"(a) The elected officers of each Post will consist of a Commander, Senior Vice Commander, Junior Vice Commander, Quartermaster and three Trustees.

"The Post Commander shall appoint an Adjutant, Officer of the Day, Service Officer and may appoint a Chaplain, Judge Advocate, Surgeon and two additional Trustees as prescribed in Section 216 in the Manual of Procedure."

The staff's recommendations are as follows: "We recommend approval. Many Posts are having difficulties filling all of their elected positions, which are in lesser priority at the Post level to that of the command position, making these positions appointed should help with this situation, to particularly with smaller Posts."

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF DeNOYER: Do we have any discussion? Microphone No. 1.

COMRADE VICTOR FUENTEALBA: Comrade Commander-in-Chief, I am Victor Fuentealba, Post 9083, Baltimore, Maryland, and a member of the By-Laws Committee. I rise in opposition to this for the following reasons: It is over 100 years of existence, traditionally, the VFW has been known for its uniformity in its policies and by-laws. If you will read this carefully, you will see that what this result will be that every Post will have the opportunity through its Commander to decide whether or not it is going to have an elected Chaplain, an elected Post Judge Advocate, or an elected Surgeon, and two additional Trustees.

I think that this is going to create an intolerable situation, because it is not the Post members that make this determination, it is the Post Commander, so that you can have one administration where you would have a Chaplain and a Post Judge Advocate and a Surgeon, and two extra Trustees, and then the following year where there is another election, the new Commander could decide he is not going to have a Chaplain or a Post Judge Advocate, a Surgeon or two extra Trustees.

I don't think there is any need for this change. I think it is going to

create a lot of inequities throughout the Veterans of Foreign Wars, and I urge the delegates to reject this because it is going to apply to every Post in the VFW. It is not voluntary, it is mandatory making the change from three elected officers to three appointed officers. Thank you.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF DeNOYER: Microphone No. 3.

COMRADE CHARLES JAMISON: Comrade Commander-in-Chief, I am Charles Jamison, VFW Post 8336, Department of Nevada, a delegate to this 113th Convention.

I rise with my colleague that was over there speaking, but I have a different reason for coming up with that. As I look around this convention, I see an awful lot of our leadership, and leadership is what we are in bad need of.

With the adoption of this Resolution or this by-law, we are eliminating the moral and spiritual leadership of the greatest organization, as far as I am concerned, in the world. If we push aside the leadership on the moral responsibility, some of our Posts already are in a moral deterioration position.

So, I rise in opposition to the passage of this. I respectfully reject it. Thank you.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF DeNOYER: Microphone No. 2.

COMRADE BENNY BACHAND: Comrade Commander-in-Chief, I am Benny Bachand, a delegate from Post 4287, Orlando, Florida, and a member of the National By-Laws Study Group. You know, we have come to these Conventions over the last few years talking about the necessity of changing our organization, and the By-Law Committee understands the tradition and the integrity of this organization.

And we don't come to this Convention lightly and make these kind of recommendations, and the Committee that met yesterday in support of the Commander-in-Chief's proposal on the by-law study. The delegate that spoke originally is not accurate in his assertions that somebody gets to flip-flop every year to determine whether they are going to be elected or appointed at the will of the Commander. That's not the intent if you read the by-law change.

One of the reasons that this is being proposed is that over 2,700 positions of Chaplains, Judge Advocates and Surgeons are not filled in this organization in 2011-2012. The membership and the Posts they are in and our organization have said to us these positions are difficult to fill. We don't know how to fill them. People that come to our Posts say, yeah, I will take it but I really don't want it.

In addition to that, the National Organization, because of Posts that have failed to fulfill the entire election process, we are just suspending 400 VFW good Posts because they can't get the leadership necessary to conduct the business of this organization on the Post level. So, I would urge the delegates to seriously look at the changes we need.

We can't depend on what the past VFW is, we have to deal with the current VFW and how we are going to remain a strong and viable organization.

Additionally, M-10, which was not presented, but M-10 affords two additional Trustees on the Post level. We are having difficulty getting three elected Trustees to do the job of monitoring the finances of our Posts, so this gives the Post the additional opportunity to appoint two members, so we will have five eyes looking at the books of our Posts in the hopes that

three will actually be able to report out what is going on at the Post level.

I would strongly urge our delegates to understand what the intent of this Resolution is, or this By-Law change, and support the fact that let's don't burden our Posts with elected positions that we can't fill, and let's move on and fill the positions that we can. Thank you very much.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF DeNOYER: Microphone No. 3.

COMRADE THEODORE BOWERS: Comrade Commander-in-Chief, I am Theodore Bowers, Post 8896, Department of Pennsylvania, and a Past National Chaplain.

I rise to oppose this amendment. This amendment joins the volume of those who seek to purge religious and religious services from our proper domain. This amendment downgrades the significance and the stature of the office of Chaplain by making it optional.

Our Ritual calls for prayers or blessings of God by the Chaplain at all Post meetings, and the leading of Memorial Services and so forth. We are one nation under God. If we cannot find someone to be the spiritual representative in our Posts, then in my opinion we should close that Post.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF DeNOYER: Microphone No. 1.

COMRADE JACK SHIVERDAKER: Comrade Commander-in-Chief, I am Jack Shiverdaker, Past State Commander of the Department of New Jersey, and a delegate from Post 5579.

I oppose this by-law change on several fronts. The biggest one is a Post that is having trouble filling its chairs is having trouble getting its membership in, it needs to step up to the next level and talk to their District Commanders, their State Commanders, and say we are having trouble getting our membership. Can you send a membership team in to help us grow our Post? If they can't grow that Post, they have two choices. They can consolidate that Post with another Post within the District, or they can surrender their charter.

If we are going to have this at the Post level, it has to be consistent throughout this organization. If those that are elected officers at the Post, they should be the elected officers at the District, the elected officers at the State and the elected officers at National.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF DeNOYER: Microphone No. 2.

COMRADE LINDA FAIRBANK: Comrade Commander-in-Chief, I am Linda Fairbank, Post 2289, Department of Washington. I come from a small Post. We have five people at our meetings many times. I am in agreement with this Resolution except for the word "may". If this Resolution said that the Commander shall appoint a Chaplain, a Judge Advocate and a Surgeon, then I would be more in agreement with it. For a small Post it is hard when you only have five to seven people elect ten. But if by changing it to an appointment, a small Post can appoint those jobs, so I can be a Trustee and I can be a Chaplain so that helps out the small Posts. But I don't like the idea that the Chaplain is optional.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF DeNOYER: Microphone No. 3.

COMRADE RICHARD TANNER: Comrade Commander-in-Chief, I am Rick Tanner, Post 3787, Department of California. I rise in opposition to this amendment. If we take 7,400 Posts and make the option of Chaplain, option to the Commander to appoint, you are going to have 7,400 different variations, and how do we follow a Ritual? Are we going to have two separate Rituals? It doesn't follow logic. Thank you.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF DeNOYER: Microphone No. 1.

COMRADE MELVIN GARRETT: Comrade Commander-in-Chief, I am Melvin Garrett, Post 6396, Department of New York. Comrade Commander, to adopt this amendment would delineate the strength of the organization at the Post level simply because elected officers, according to the by-laws, are responsible for attending the Post on that level. Also, what they are responsible for is to show their responsibility as elected officers.

Should we eliminate this, then we would be saddled with a lot of appointed officers, appointed persons who may or may not support the organization.

I think the strength is in the elective officers who be responsible. If they are not shaping up according to their responsibility, then we have the right to remove them and to put someone else in. There must be other members of the Post who are willing to serve in those capacities, but to have that as an appointed position would show a personality appointment, and it would not help the organization to sustain as a viable force.

Thank you.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF DeNOYER: Microphone No. 3.

COMRADE DANIEL RASH: Comrade Commander-in-Chief, I am Daniel Rash, Post 8071, Virginia City, Nevada, a delegate to this Convention. I oppose this because if you don't have anybody to step up and take an elected position, who is he going to appoint? I have been to a lot of meetings, and we set up a lot of Posts here in Nevada, and if you can't get somebody to volunteer to be elected to even run, who is he going to appoint? That is all I have to say. I oppose this.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF DeNOYER: Microphone No. 1.

COMRADE GERALD WARD: Comrade Commander-in-Chief, I am Gerald Ward, a delegate to this Convention, Post 5713, Department of Ohio. I oppose this amendment. Comrades, if we had this, you still have seven elected members of your Post. This does not say we are going to do away with our Ritual in our Post. We are going to still have somebody do the Opening Prayer, or the Prayer of the National Home. But some of these smaller Posts that can't function or don't have the members, let's face it, at the Post level the Surgeon, the Judge Advocate do nothing. We don't need to fill these positions. Sometimes you can't fill them. You just heard Benny Bachand talk on how many Posts throughout the whole VFW organization cannot fill these positions.

These election reports are not complete, because they don't have the members or they didn't elect them. Let's go ahead and do a change to our National By-Laws. I stand in support of this by-law amendment.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF DeNOYER: Microphone No. 2.

COMRADE THEODORE EATON: Comrade Commander-in-Chief, I am Ted Eaton, Post 2104, Department of Massachusetts. I rise in opposition to this motion. I think we are diluting the organization. I think when you have this particular situation in the Post, the Post is on its way down the hill and eventually demise. We should nip it in the bud. If they need help, let's give it to them and keep these Posts going.

I don't think we should eliminate Posts. The addition of two Trustees, I don't agree with. Half of the Posts can't even get the three Trustees to a meeting now. I think we should keep it the way it is with three Trustees and not five. Thank you.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF DeNOYER: Microphone No. 3.

COMRADE ALLEN "GUNNER" KENT: Comrade Commander-in-Chief,

I am “Gunner” Kent, Delegate from Post 9972, Sierra, Arizona. I just want to clarify a couple of things here. I heard one comrade say if you appoint them, it is not an important position. Well, mine is an appointed position and I kind of think it is important.

The second thing is somebody says, well, the Chaplain is optional. Nobody is saying anything is optional. There will be a Chaplain, there will be a Judge Advocate, there will be a Surgeon. But if the Posts can't get elective people, they can then appoint somebody, but the positions must be filled. It doesn't give you the option of not having these positions.

Read what the by-law says, comrades. Nobody says these are optional positions. The Adjutant General's position is not optional, it is an appointed position. You can appoint these others. What it gives the Posts that are small, and let's quit kidding each other in saying, oh, let's get somebody in there and help them. We can't even get people to come to meetings anymore, whether you send anybody down there or not.

All the By-Laws Review Committee is doing here is giving a Post that is trying to continue to function, the ability to continue to function. That's all they are doing. Nothing else, there is nothing cynical, and nothing to dilute the organization here, but it is to give a small Post the time to rebuild themselves.

Thank you very much, Comrade Commander-in-Chief. I stand in support.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF DeNOYER: Microphone No. 2.

One second, Microphone No. 2. I will get right back to you.

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF RIVERS: I just wanted to make a clarification. I know when “Gunner” was at the mike, the wording is “may appoint.” So, the way this by-law is worded, it would be optional for the Commander to appoint a Chaplain, Judge Advocate and Surgeon.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF DeNOYER: Microphone No. 2.

COMRADE DENNIS LYDDY (Post 1807): Comrade Commander-in-Chief, I am from the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, your host home state, Dennis Lyddy. I stand in opposition to this Resolution for two points. The appointment of two additional Trustees are establishing a precedent that will present negative opportunities that an elected officer can also be an appointed Trustee, therefore, fostering a negative perception on the potential use of funds.

The second point I have is that truly if we are an organization like no other, why is not a service officer an elected position so that we can get more involved with dealing with the issues of my fellow brothers and sisters in Iraq and Afghanistan? Thank you, Comrade Commander-in-Chief.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF DeNOYER: Microphone No. 3.

COMRADE ALLEN JONES: Comrade Commander-in-Chief, I am Al Jones, Post 21, Department of Pennsylvania. One has already been stated. When the Adjutant General stood up here and said that he shall, but he didn't read the Resolution. It says he may appoint a Chaplain, not that he shall. The other one is —

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF DeNOYER: Al, we did correct that. That was corrected.

COMRADE ALLEN JONES (Post 21 – Pennsylvania): That was one of my points.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF DeNOYER: We did correct that.

COMRADE ALLEN JONES (Post 21 – Pennsylvania): The other one is

if I elect three Trustees and my Commander can appoint two Trustees, and I was one of those that was elected, I would say that he is taking my authority away from me, and the three that are elected would say, well, it is optional whether I go to a meeting or not, because you appointed two additional Trustees. So, it really is going against the betterment of the organization.

I just want to say I am a World War II veteran. Sometimes I am devastated by the types of changes we want to make in our by-laws that this generation of the organization want. I am opposed to this change, Commander.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF DeNOYER: Is there anybody at the microphone that is in favor of this? Raise your hand. There is one. We do have one person.

COMRADE ROBERT WEISS: Comrade Commander-in-Chief, I am Robert Weiss, Post 2406, Department of Michigan. I stand in favor of this by-law change. We are all sitting here talking about the by-laws and what is going to happen if you turn this down, come next Monday, then Kevin Jones will send letters out to every one of these Posts that did not fulfill their obligations of getting the officers.

You need to allow the Posts to continue to function in an honorable way. They will put a Chaplain in there. So, let's pass this motion.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF DeNOYER: Anybody else in favor? Anyone else in favor? Is there anyone objecting to voting on this to move it along?

COMRADE HUGH LONG: Comrade Commander-in-Chief, I am Hugh Long from Post 4302, Mississippi. I call for the question.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF DeNOYER: Do I have a second? Microphone No. 3.

COMRADE PETER HOOK: Comrade Commander-in-Chief, I am Peter Hook, Post 6393, Department of Pennsylvania. I second the motion.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF DeNOYER: We have a motion made and seconded. On the vote, all in favor will say "aye"; all opposed.

PARLIAMENTARIAN FRITZ MIHELICIC: Comrades, you were voting to close debate. Let's try this again. If you are in favor of closing debate and getting to the actual motion, then you need to vote "yes".

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF DeNOYER: All in favor; all opposed. The "ayes" have it.

Now, all in favor of adoption of B-8 will say "aye"; those opposed "nay". The "nays" have it.

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF RIVERS: Thank you, comrades. The next proposal for consideration on the floor for passage is M-11, dealing with Posts. I will not read the whole thing. In essence, what this by-law change says is that the Junior Vice or Senior Vice Commander-Elect does not have to automatically move up when the office in front of them is vacated.

Under the staff's comments, the changes under vacancies provide the options now for the Senior Vice and Junior Vice Commander-Elect to move up when a vacancy exists in the position of Commander and Senior Vice Commander in the Post.

It also clarifies the process for removal of an officer by the Post and the notification of the removal process. In essence, in the event of vacancies of the office of Commander or Commander-Elect, the Senior Vice Commander or the Senior Vice Commander-Elect may choose to succeed to the duties of that office and may choose to succeed if he is a Junior or a Senior.

The key word change there is “choose”. That is, if the Senior Vice Commander doesn’t feel like he is ready to move up and be Commander, he can decline. Then you would elect a new Commander. The way we have done it in the past, as most of you know, if the guy said no, he just resigned his office and somebody else took it and they re-elected him to his current position. This makes it where it is not mandatory for the Junior and Senior to succeed to the next highest office if he chose not to do so.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF DeNOYER: Do we have any discussion on M-11? Any discussion on M-11?

Microphone No. 3.

COMRADE RONALD RUSAKIEWICZ: Comrade Commander-in-Chief, I am Ron Rusakiewicz from Post 9460 in Stratford, Connecticut. I rise in opposition to this by-law amendment. I am a member of the By-Law Committee. We discussed this at great length in the Committee yesterday, and there were some very good points. A lot of things that it centered on, was the small Posts that were having problems, and there were 2,400 different offices that weren’t being filled in the Veterans of Foreign Wars.

It seems as though, if you look at the other by-laws as well, that what we are doing lately with these by-laws as is evident by the last debate that we had, that we are trying to take the problems of the small Posts and placing them on the large Posts. And what we should be doing, I don’t disagree at all that the small Posts are having problems filling offices, but there should be a by-law amendment geared to them. That could be done by simply making another by-law amendment for next year that would address that problem for the smaller Posts.

The second thing is that I think that every single person in this room, every good comrade who stood up before that podium and raised his right hand in the air, or her right hand in the air and put their left hand on the flag of our country and swore to that oath, to take that chair of Junior Vice Commander knowing full well that if anything happened to the persons in front of them, they would assume that duty and be ready, willing and able to do so. It was their commitment, and I think it’s an honor that we shouldn’t be taking away from the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States.

I think that when you take that chair, it is a commitment to the VFW and it is a commitment also to the Post that you serve.

If something happens just like when you were in the service, you step up to the plate and do what you have to do to continue on the good work of the VFW. So, I am opposed to this. This was also soundly defeated last year on this Convention floor, and I urge all of the delegates to do so again.

Thank you.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF DeNOYER: Microphone No. 1.

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF GARDNER: Comrade Commander-in-Chief, I am Glen Gardner, a delegate from VFW Post 3359, Garland, Texas. I stand in favor of this proposed by-law change. Under the last by-law change that we debated prior to this, this does give the option to that Senior Vice Commander, the Junior Vice Commander if they feel qualified and have the time to move into the position of Commander and Senior Vice Commander.

One of the comrades yesterday at the by-law meeting spoke of the fact that he had a young Afghanistan veteran who had been elected Junior Vice Commander. He wanted to learn. He wanted to do what this organization

says is right, but he also made it very clear at the beginning of the year that he didn't have the time to be the Commander of that Post. He was going to school. As soon as he graduates, he will be prepared in the next year to go up through the chairs and be an officer.

Yet, under the by-laws today, and the way we used to do it in the past, if the Commander resigned, the Senior Vice didn't want to move up, he would resign and the Junior Vice could resign, and we would elect them back in. You cannot do that anymore. We changed the by-laws to say if you resign from a position, you cannot be elected back into that position in the same VFW year.

So, you take that option away from this young veteran who doesn't want to be and doesn't have the time to be the Senior Vice, but yet wants to be the Junior Vice. Now, he has to resign and no longer is an officer of that Post. Can you understand what kind of feeling he has, a sour taste he has in his mouth about what we have done to him in this organization? I am afraid he will end up like a lot of the Vietnam veterans did when we came back and were turned away because of the things that happened within the organization.

We have got to go forward as an organization, Comrade Commander-in-Chief and delegates. We can't continue to live in the past. If we do, we are going to die for sure. We have got to do the things that will make us a progressive organization, do the things that have to be done to go forward and make this a better organization for the future.

I encourage the delegates to support this Resolution which gives that option to that Senior Vice Commander or Junior Vice Commander to move into that position. Thank you, Commander-in-Chief.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF DeNOYER: Microphone No. 3.

COMRADE KENNETH WISEMAN: Comrade Commander-in-Chief, I am Ken Wiseman, Senior Vice Commander from the Department of Hawaii. I think it is rather interesting, I just listened to my Comrade Glen Gardner across the aisle and invoke what I consider fear, and he started talking about my generation.

I went to college, I am active duty navy, and I led my Post two years in a row to be All American and All State. I am now serving as Senior Vice Commander of my Department. I do not think that my generation is ever going to run away from the leadership. I do not think that giving someone the out and allowing a random person to come in and manage the assets and the affairs of your Post is a good thing, because the next Resolution for the by-laws change we are going to talk about is the same set of rules for the Districts.

If you can't lead, get out of the way, because there are plenty of comrades who will lead our Departments, our Posts and our organization. Comrade Commander-in-Chief, I stand opposed. I yield the floor.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF DeNOYER: Microphone No. 2.

COMRADE HAL ROESCH: Comrade Commander-in-Chief, Hal Roesch, Post 3219, Hampton, Virginia. Has anyone looked at the by-laws lately? It already states in our by-laws that they do not have to move up. If someone has a copy of it, open it up. I don't understand why we say we want to do something to allow them the option that is already in the by-laws.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF DeNOYER: Microphone No. 1.

COMRADE HUGH LONG: Comrade Commander-in-Chief, I am Hugh Long, Post 4302, Mississippi. I am a little tired of us trying to water down

the organization. When there is a vacancy, there is always a replacement. If you don't believe that, the Pope is always replaced; the President is always replaced.

If we don't have a problem with our by-laws and ritual, what we have a problem with is recruiting and retention. If we don't have someone that wants to take that job, kick him out and let's get somebody else. Thank you.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF DeNOYER: Microphone No. 3.

COMRADE JOHN McNEILL: Comrade Commander-in-Chief, I am John McNeill, Post 5412, Brooke, Virginia. Let me read Section 220 of the Manual of Procedure. I think that makes it abundantly clear to everyone.

"In the event of a vacancy the office of the Commander or Commander-Elect, Senior Vice Commander or the Senior Vice Commander-Elect, shall at once, and without further formality succeed to the title and duties of such office."

As such Junior Vice Commander and on down the line. Now, the problem we are going to be faced with there are some individuals, and let's say the Senior Vice and the Junior Vice is out of the country or is not going to get back until a month or two months, or better yet he really wants to stay there and learn the job. So, you press up. If he does not take that job at that time, he is out.

Now, what you are going to be starting to do is to go to a second election, and you might even get a third election with a Junior Vice, and what you are going to really have, you are not going to have any option, you are going to lose that Post because of the fact that the Manual of Procedure states right now that they must succeed immediately.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF DeNOYER: I will now call for a vote. All in favor of this Manual of Procedure say "aye"; opposed. The "nays" have it.

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF RIVERS: Thank you, Commander-in-Chief. The next set aside for consideration will be B-11. Basically, B-11 is the same in Districts that we voted down under B-8. That is on a District level the elected officers should consist of the Commander, Senior Vice, Junior Vice, Quartermaster and three Trustees. The District Commander may appoint an Adjutant, Chief of Staff, Service Officer, Inspector, and may appoint a Chaplain, Judge Advocate and Surgeon. It is basically the same as B-8 only it applies to the District. As Fritz pointed out, it is without the Trustee option, but otherwise it is the same.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF DeNOYER: Microphone No. 1.

COMRADE VICTOR FUENTEALBA: Comrade Commander-in-Chief, Victor Fuentealba, a delegate from Post 9083 in Baltimore, Maryland. My arguments for B-8 are the same, urging you to reject B-11. I don't think it is in the best benefit of the Veterans of Foreign Wars that we change this. Again, we will be creating the option for three officers in the District, which are currently elective officers.

I don't think the Districts have the same problem as the smaller Posts do. I urge you to reject this proposed amendment.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF DeNOYER: Microphone No. 3.

COMRADE PETER HOOK: Comrade Commander-in-Chief, I am Peter Hook, Post 6393, Department of Pennsylvania, State Chaplain, District Chaplain and Post Chaplain.

I rise in opposition. The responsibility of the Chaplain goes beyond the reading of the prayers. We provide moral and spiritual leadership. As a District Chaplain, I have the responsibility to mentor to Post Chaplains in

my District on how to better serve those who serve. I recommend that we keep this an elective position in the District.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF DeNOYER: Microphone No. 1.

COMRADE DICK KENNEDY: Comrade Commander-in-Chief, Dick Kennedy, Department of Europe, Post 27, and a delegate to this Convention. I call for the vote, please.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF DeNOYER: Microphone No. 2.

COMRADE ALLEN "GUNNER" KENT: "Gunner" Kent, a delegate from Post 9972, Sierra Vista, Arizona. They beat the last one, and they sure are not going to approve this one. I second the motion.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF DeNOYER: We have a call for the vote. All in favor will say "aye"; opposed. The "nays" have it.

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF RIVERS: Thank you, Chief.

COMRADE KEN WISEMAN: A point of order, Comrade Commander-in-Chief. I am Ken Wiseman, Senior Vice Commander of Hawaii. I have a question. The comrade mentioned B-8 as being tied to another proposed change, and that we would need to go back. Do we do that now?

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF RIVERS: We are not really going to have to go back. The Council can make that change. What we decided to do was rather than going back and reconsidering and doing that, we were just going to ask the Council to make the changes since they don't apply any more. It just simplifies the procedure. It will be taken care of.

COMRADE KEN WISEMAN (Post 970 – Hawaii): Thank you, Commander-in-Chief.

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF RIVERS: M-14 is the next that has been set aside. In essence, this is the same as we just voted down. It applies to the Districts not moving up in office, and we voted that down with the Posts. So, Comrade Commander-in-Chief, I would anticipate little debate on M-14.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF DeNOYER: Microphone No. 3.

COMRADE RONALD RUSAKIEWICZ (Post 9460 – Connecticut): Comrade Commander-in-Chief, for all the same reasons we knocked down M-11, I would urge this Convention to not adopt M-14.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF DeNOYER: I am going to move it and I am going to call for a vote on M-14. All in favor; those opposed. I think it is obvious. The "nays" have it.

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF RIVERS: Thank you, Commander-in-Chief. The next set aside and the last on my list is M-16.

COMRADE ED CROUCHER: A point of order. Comrade Commander-in-Chief, I am Ed Croucher, Senior Vice Commander of the Department of Montana, Post 6786, Eureka. My point of order is that we voted — there was a call for the question to determine that, and then on the previous motion that we had, not just this one we just passed, but the previous one. We voted on the question is my understanding, which was before us, and we did not vote on the amendment itself, approval or disapproval. We skipped the vote on the call for the question.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF DeNOYER: Is it M-14 or B-11?

COMRADE ED CROUCHER (Post 6786 – Montana): It is B-11.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF DeNOYER: So you want to call for the vote on M-11?

COMRADE ED CROUCHER (Post 6786 – Montana): Is it M-11 or B-11?

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF DeNOYER: B-11, I believe.

COMRADE ED CROUCHER (Post 6786 – Montana): We just skipped the call for the question is what we did.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF DeNOYER: All right. So we will call for the vote on B-11. All in favor; all opposed. The “nays” have it.

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF RIVERS: Thank you, comrades. The next and last for consideration is M-16, Article V – Departments. Amend Section 518 by deleting “within 15 days” at the end of the last sentence and replacing with “by August 1.” The Committee recommended approval noting that this change provides the specific time frame that the Department Quartermaster is to have the Department budget to the Adjutant General.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF DeNOYER: On the question.
Microphone No. 2.

COMRADE ROBERT PINTO: Comrade Commander-in-Chief, Robert Pinto, a delegate from Post 1817, New Jersey. I rise in opposition to this. We are getting cut short of time to try to get an accurate budget. I know in New Jersey we have ours a little bit later, but even with the 15 days there is fine. It keeps getting cut back and cut back, and by the time we finish the Convention, our State Convention, and then we have the National Convention in between, and I just don’t believe there is enough time to really get an accurate budget from any Department.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF DeNOYER: Anybody else on the question? Anyone else on the question?

Microphone No. 1.

COMRADE JOE ORLANDO: Comrade Commander-in-Chief, Joe Orlando, a delegate from Post 5941, New Jersey. You already have August 1st in some situations where the COA does meet July 15th or thereabouts. The real situation is as the National Convention has been moved up so did our opportunities to have their COA in a timely manner to meet this August 1st deadline. I propose that we keep the wording the way it is, sir.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF DeNOYER: On the question; on the question. I call for the question. All in favor will say “aye”; opposed. The “ayes” have it. It is majority only. Will you explain that, Fritz?

PARLIAMENTARIAN FRITZ MIHELIC: Comrades, this was not a by-law change. A by-law change requires a two-thirds vote to pass. If you look in the books that you received in your packets, there is a provision, the two boxes, the bottom box, “The Manual of Procedure Amendments requires only a majority vote to pass.”

The Commander-in-Chief was not in doubt that this was a majority vote for this Manual of Procedure change, and he determined that it did pass.

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF RIVERS: Commander-in-Chief, thank you very much. That completes the approved amendments.

I would call on the Vice-Chairman of the Committee, with your permission, to address those recommendations that we recommended rejection.

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF GARDNER: Thank you, Commander-in-Chief. As the Chairman did, I will read very slowly the Proposed By-Laws and Manual of Procedure numbers that were recommended for rejection by the Committee. If you want to set one aside, then come before the microphone and make a motion to adopt and have a second.

Rejected by the By-Laws Committee are the following:
B-2; M-5; M-9; B-9; M-12; M-15; B-13; B-15; and B-20.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF DeNOYER: Are there any motions on these items?

Microphone No. 1.

COMRADE DAVE BUTTERS: Comrade Commander-in-Chief, Dave Butters, a delegate from VFW Post 475, Delaware. I request that B-2 be set aside.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF DeNOYER: We need a motion to adopt.

COMRADE DAVE BUTTERS (Post 475 – Delaware): I move that it be adopted.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF DeNOYER: Which one, B-2?

COMRADE DAVE BUTTERS (Post 475 – Delaware): Yes, B-2.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF DeNOYER: Do we have a second? The motion dies for the lack of a second.

Are there any other motions on these Resolutions?

The By-Laws Committee is dismissed and we thank them for their service.

REPORT OF COMMITTEE ON GENERAL RESOLUTIONS

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF DeNOYER: The report of the Committee on Finance and Internal Organization has already been given. We have already had that one.

Next is the report of the Committee on General Resolutions. The Chairman is George J. Lisicki.

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF LISICKI: Thank you, Commander-in-Chief. Thank you for the appointment to be the Chairman of the General Resolutions Committee. Comrades, the General Resolutions Committee met yesterday afternoon at 2:00 o'clock p.m., along with my Vice-Chairman, Past Commander-in-Chief Jack Carney, Past Commander-in-Chief Gary Kurpius, and Past Commander-in-Chief John Furgess, who was excused. As we all heard the report on John, he has had a bypass surgery today, and we have John in our prayers.

Comrade Commander-in-Chief, we had five Resolutions come before the General Resolutions Committee. I will read first, the recommendations for approval. The Committee recommended for approval is Resolution 301 and Resolution 305. I move at this time that Resolutions 301 and 305 be approved.

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF JACK CARNEY: I am Jack Carney, a delegate from Post 4643, Satellite Beach, Florida. I second the motion.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF DeNOYER: Any set asides? Any set asides? On the question; on the question. Hearing none, all in favor will signify by the usual voting sign of "aye"; those opposed. The "ayes" have it.

By the way, I would just like to give a little credit where credit is due. The gentleman standing behind me is the Judge Advocate General Fritz Mihelcic, and he is doing a heck of a good job. He is smarter than I am, I can assure you, and he has given me a lot of help. Give him a big hand. (Applause)

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF LISICKI: Comrade Commander-in-Chief and delegates, the following Resolutions were recommended for rejection: if you want any set aside, please let us know.

Recommended for rejection are Resolutions 302, 303 and 304.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF DeNOYER: Microphone No. 1.

COMRADE LYNN ROLF: Comrade Commander-in-Chief, Lynn Rolf, Post 56, Leavenworth, Kansas. I move to set aside Resolution 304.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF DeNOYER: We need to make a motion to adopt.

COMRADE LYNN ROLF (Post 56 – Kansas): I make a motion to adopt 304, please.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF DeNOYER: We have a motion to adopt Resolution 304. Do we have a second?

COMRADE BOBBY COX: Comrade Commander-in-Chief, Bobby Cox, Post 2715, Kansas. I will second that motion.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF DeNOYER: The motion is seconded. We have a motion made and seconded. On the question; on the question; on the question. On the question, you have an opportunity to discuss it if you want to on Resolution 304.

COMRADE LYNN ROLF (Post 56 – Kansas): I am still a rookie. I am Lynn Rolf, Post 56, Leavenworth, Kansas. Comrade Commander-in-Chief and comrades, this Resolution for this flag, you know we heard General Odierno this morning discuss how important it is for this new generation of soldiers. We have a new generation of Gold Star families. These families are waiting on us right now to adopt this flag.

We can lead the charge on this flag, and it is not to replace the United States flag, it is not going to go on the coffin. It is not going anywhere else except when that family wants to hang it on their door, wants to hang it on a flagpole, or anything they want to do. It is embroidered with the family names. It is our opportunity to thank the Gold Star families.

So, please, comrades, it is our time to get in front of this flag because there are other veterans organizations that have already adopted it. We are the only combat veterans organization that hasn't. If we live up to the motto "No One Does More for Veterans," and it should be for families, too, please help us and get on board with this flag. Thank you, comrades.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF DeNOYER: Microphone No. 1.

COMRADE KEN WISEMAN: Comrade Commander-in-Chief, Ken Wiseman, Post 970, Senior Vice Commander of Hawaii. I stand in earnest support of this Resolution, and I stand with my comrade from Kansas, my dear friend Lynn. If anybody in the VFW honestly thinks that a Post, a District and a Department of this organization would ever want to replace the American flag, the door is right over there.

Furthermore, we have flags that are adopted and supported by this country and this organization that also recognize other groups for their distinguished service. One of those flags is the only other flag besides the American flag to fly above the White House, and that is the POW-MIA flag. They represent a group of individuals who are unaccounted for at this time, but I don't really need to explain that to you.

So, let's take an opportunity, as Lynn says, and continue to lead the charge, because no one does more for veterans. I yield the floor.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF DeNOYER: Microphone No. 1.

COMRADE STEVE RYLANT: Comrade Commander-in-Chief, Steve Rylant, Post 41, Loveland, Colorado. I rise in opposition to this. I believe that we all fought for the American flag, and that is the one we need to be paying attention to. There is no reason why if someone wants to buy this other flag from the company that is selling it, that they can't do that. They are not prevented from buying this flag and presenting it to whomever they

want without us approving it. Thank you.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF DeNOYER: Comrade Lisicki, would you like to comment?

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF LISICKI: Comrades, I will read the staff's position on this Resolution 304.

Promotion of this flag diminishes the U.S. Flag which is traditionally used to cover the casket of those who die in military service to their country and which is presented to the surviving spouse, parents, et cetera.

The U.S. military personnel did not defend this flag and are not buried under this flag. Gold Star Flags already exist to commemorate those lost in military service. This Resolution was rejected at the 112th VFW National Convention.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF DeNOYER: Microphone No. 3.

COMRADE JOHN McNEILL: Comrade Commander-in-Chief, John McNeill, Post 5412, Brooke, Virginia. This is a tough one. We all know it is a tough one. There is no one in the Veterans of Foreign Wars that does not honor the Gold Star families, the Gold Star Mothers as well as we do. You have to read the Resolution very closely.

It is asking the Congress to support it. When Congress supports something like this, you get a law, and now we are really talking about the potential of a replacement of an Honor and Remember Flag for our fallen heroes that will now replace in all intents and purposes the United States Flag.

We all fought under the United States Flag, but now we are going to start to discriminate. When we bury one of our fallen warriors under the Honor and Remember Flag, what about the other veterans that fought just as hard and came back to this country? They don't happen to be a fallen warrior. We have the difference that we are banning the United States Flag and honoring the honor remembrance flag. We are descending our purpose here and what we are all about in the Veterans of Foreign Wars. Thank you.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF DeNOYER: Microphone No. 1.

COMRADE BOB COX: Comrade Commander-in-Chief, Bob Cox, Post 2715, Kansas. Again, as my comrade said, I stand in favor of it. As our tag line is "No One Does More for Veterans" and we should add "and Families". It is a family organization. We need to do more for the families. How else can we show our respect for our fallen comrades who fought and died for our flag, other than with another flag to give to those people, their families to honor their sacrifice and their service? Thank you, Comrade Commander-in-Chief.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF DeNOYER: You are welcome.

COMRADE BOB COX (Post 2715 – Kansas): It is not going to replace the American flag.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF DeNOYER: Microphone No. 1.

COMRADE RENEE SIMPSON: Comrade Commander-in-Chief, Renee Simpson, Post 10911, Wisconsin. I am in complete support of us having this flag to honor our fallen. We are a combat veteran organization, and the biggest thing we try to stand up for is taking care of the widows, the widowers and their children.

This flag will allow us to commemorate them, to give them something other than the American flag, to show them our deepest respect as an organization. I wish that it would go further and that it would go to a

federal law. That way everyone could fly this in honor of our fallen soldiers. Thank you, Commander-in-Chief.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF DeNOYER: Microphone No. 1.

COMRADE DAVE CUBA: Comrade Commander-in-Chief, Dave Cuba, a delegate from Kansas, Post 6654. I am in support of adopting this Resolution. We all remember August 6, 2011, when the Chinook went down, and we remember the little boy on CNN, when everybody else was getting attention, and the little boy said, "What about my father?"

Well, Bryan Nichols was a friend and a comrade, and a member of my Post, and we had the honor a couple weeks back, of presenting his family with an Honor Remember Flag. I can't tell you how much it means to these Gold Star families to be receiving these personalized flags.

Again, it is not replacing anything, it is an additional symbol of appreciation for these families.

We have had the honor of presenting 23 to 38 families, Gold Star families, in Kansas with these flags. It sure would have been nice to know and be able to wear our VFW caps and let these families know that the VFW supports this as we give it to them.

Thirteen states have already passed legislation to endorse these flags. Comrades, please vote in favor of this Resolution.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF DeNOYER: Microphone No. 2.

COMRADE DENNIS LYDDY: Comrade Commander-in-Chief, Dennis Lyddy, VFW Post 1807, Massachusetts.

Comrades, it is the United States of America. Therefore, as a service member that served in a combat zone, the only flag that gave me comfort and knowing that my family would get comfort would be the presentation, God forbid, the U.S. Flag at my funeral.

I have no opposition to anyone, any citizen presenting a different flag, but the reason why I raised my right hand was the U.S., the United States Flag. Thank you.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF DeNOYER: Microphone No. 3.

COMRADE ALLEN JONES (Post 21 – Pennsylvania): Comrade Commander-in-Chief, I am Al Jones, Past Commander of the Department of Pennsylvania. I am proud to stand here and say that our Veterans Commission of Pennsylvania took up the same Resolution in their meeting, sent it on to the Governor of Pennsylvania, and the Governor just recently approved this same Resolution in Pennsylvania, and we will be flying that flag.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF DeNOYER: Microphone No. 1, is there someone there?

COMRADE LARRY WATERS: Comrade Commander-in-Chief, Larry Waters, a delegate from Post 475, Delaware. I stand in strong opposition to this. I have been on the Honor Guard for the last 15 years and I have presented well over 2,000 flags to families in every situation, combat, KIA, and I do not want to present anything but the American Flag of the United States, Comrade Commander-in-Chief.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF DeNOYER: Microphone No. 1.

COMRADE CHARINE ZSALUDKO: Comrade Commander-in-Chief, I am Charine Zsaludko, Post 7609, a delegate from Ohio. I also strongly oppose this. We do not need to micromanage our funerals. The only flag that I wish ever to be covered over is with the United States Flag of America. Nothing gave me greater pride than when the VFW presented the

American Flag to my sister when my father passed away.

If someone wants to purchase the flag, other than the one that is now the United States Flag, or in addition to that flag, they have that choice. We do not need to have a law, a mandate or anything else. We serve under the United States Flag. Thank you, Commander-in-Chief.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF DeNOYER: Microphone No. 3.

COMRADE MIKE MUSGROVE: Comrade Commander-in-Chief, Mike Musgrove, a delegate from Post 2350, Elko, Nevada. I call for the question.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF DeNOYER: Do I have a second?

COMRADE GILBERT HERNANDEZ: You do, Commander. Comrade Commander-in-Chief, Gilbert Hernandez, Post 2350, Nevada, a delegate to this Convention. I second the motion.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF DeNOYER: This vote is to close the debate. Does everyone understand that? All in favor will say "aye"; opposed. The "ayes" have it.

Now, on the motion to adopt Resolution 304, all in favor will say "aye"; opposed. I think it is obvious the "nays" have it.

Are there any other motions on the General Resolutions? Any other motions on the General Resolutions? There being none, we will move on. According to the Convention Rule No. 7, the Resolutions Committee will not be discharged at this time and they will be in session until 4:30 Tuesday.

We will have the report of the Committee on National Security and Foreign Affairs by its Chairman, Edward S. Banas, Past Commander-in-Chief.

REPORT OF COMMITTEE ON NATIONAL SECURITY AND FOREIGN AFFAIRS

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF BANAS: Good afternoon, comrades. Thank you, Commander-in-Chief. It is my pleasure to report that the Convention Committee on National Security and Foreign Affairs convened at the Reno/Sparks Convention Center at 2:00 o'clock p.m., Sunday, July 22, 2012. Your instructions were read, roll call was conducted, and action was taken on the Resolutions referred to this Committee.

We decided this year to conduct our meeting in conjunction with the POW/MIA Subcommittee because the information we hear from all our guest speakers, and the Resolutions that we pass, are important to all Committee members.

I would first like to express the Committee's appreciation to the Departments of Michigan, Montana, California, Minnesota, Texas and the Pacific for submitting National Security Resolutions to this great Convention. Bottom up involvement, comrades, is what makes this such a great organization.

For their support, wisdom and guidance, I also want to thank the Vice-Chairman of the National Security and Foreign Affairs Committee, Past Commander-in-Chief Jim Mueller from Missouri;

the Chairman of the POW/MIA Subcommittee, Past Commander-in-Chief John Smart from New Hampshire;

the Vice-Chairman of the POW/MIA Subcommittee, Past Commander-in-Chief John Gwizdak from Georgia;

Committee Advisors Joe Davis from the Washington Office and Debra

Anderson from the National Headquarters;

and all the members of the National Security and Foreign Affairs Committee, and the POW/MIA Subcommittee, for their thoughtful deliberations and active participation.

We were also very fortunate to hear from five guest speakers who traveled from different corners of the world just to attend our VFW National Convention. We heard from:

Deputy Minister Chin, Hsiao-hui from the Republic of China Veterans Affairs Commission;

Russian War Veterans Committee President Alexander Kovalev;

Retired Russian Colonel Gennady Shorokov, Executive Secretary of the Combat Brotherhood;

Retired Major General "Q" Winfield, who is the new Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for POW/MIA Affairs;

and Johnie Webb, Deputy to the Commander of the Joint POW/MIA Accounting Command, who was joined in our question and answer session by his boss, Major General Steve Tom.

Commander-in-Chief, the Committee carefully deliberated each resolution. I will now move forward with the National Security and Foreign Affairs Committee recommendations. If any of the delegates to this Convention would like a resolution set aside for discussion, please so indicate after I have completed the approval segment of the report and moved for adoption.

I will now read the resolution numbers that the Committee recommends for approval as submitted.

Resolutions 401 to 420, and Resolutions 424, 425, 426, 429 and 431. I now move for the adoption of these Resolutions as submitted.

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF JIM MUELLER: Comrade Commander-in-Chief, Jim Mueller, Post 5077, Missouri. I second the motion for adoption of these Resolutions.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF DeNOYER: Do we have any set asides from that block?

Microphone No. 1.

COMRADE DeWITT WOODWARD: Comrade Commander-in-Chief, DeWitt Woodward, Post 1530, Wisconsin. I move we set aside Resolution 415.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF DeNOYER: Resolution 415 has been set aside. Any other set asides? Okay. Resolution 415 has been set aside.

COMRADE DAVE CHRISTENSEN (Post 817 – Iowa): I would like Resolution 402 be set aside.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF DeNOYER: Resolution 402 has been set aside. Any other set asides; any other set asides? We are going to vote on those other than the set asides. All in favor will signify by saying "aye"; those opposed. The "ayes" have it.

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF BANAS: Resolution 402, comrades, is to Secure America's Borders. It says, "Be It Resolved, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that we urge the Administration and Congress to fast-track funding for the Departments of Homeland Security and Justice to expedite all initiatives to secure America's borders from all threats, foreign and domestic; and

"Be it Further Resolved, that we insist the U.S. government aggressively work to identify and deport illegal aliens who commit crimes and overstay

their visas.”

The intent of this Resolution, comrades, is to secure America’s borders from all threats, foreign and domestic, and to identify and deport illegal aliens who commit crimes.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF DeNOYER: Do we have any discussion on Resolution 402?

Microphone No. 1.

COMRADE DAVE CHRISTENSEN (Post 817 – Iowa): I am fully in agreement with the amendment. I have a problem with one word. It says “deport illegal aliens who commit crimes and overstay their visas.” I would like that word “and” be changed to “or”, so either one of those.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF DeNOYER: Are you making a motion to change that?

COMRADE DAVE CHRISTENSEN (Post 810 – Iowa): Yes.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF DeNOYER: And include the word “or” in place of the word “and”?

COMRADE DAVE CHRISTENSEN: Yes, I am. I so move.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF DeNOYER: Do we have a second?

COMRADE MICHAEL MUSGROVE (Post 2350 – Nevada): I will second that motion.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF DeNOYER: A motion has been made and seconded. On the question; on the question. All in favor of the amendment to change the word from “and” to “or” will vote by the usual sign of “aye”; opposed. The “ayes” have it.

Now, we can vote on the motion, as amended, Resolution 402. All in favor; all opposed. The “ayes” have it. Thank you.

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF BANAS: On this, comrades, the title is Military Absentee Voting. I will read the two Resolveds, because the intent is exactly the same.

“Be It Resolved, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that our Department Legislative Committees will work with 22 state governments to ensure they adopt all corrective measures as expressed in the MOVE Act of 2009; and

“Be It Further Resolved, that we urge the federal government to assess monetary penalties against those states who fail.”

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF DeNOYER: Is there any discussion on Resolution 415?

Microphone No. 1.

COMRADE DeWITT WOODWARD (Post 1530 – Wisconsin): I am in opposition to the second “Be It Resolved,” that we urge the federal government to assess mandatory penalties against those states who fail. I don’t think that is a necessary “Resolved”.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF DeNOYER: Any other discussion? On the question, any other discussion?

Microphone No. 1.

COMRADE ROGER BOEKER: Comrade Commander-in-Chief, Roger Boeker, Post 1318, Wisconsin. I rise in opposition to the phrase in the second “Whereas,” eliminating “the notarized or witnessed ballot requirement.” All veterans have plenty of identification, multiple kinds. They also have officers that know who they are and can witness their ballot. We need not to foster or support voter fraud, either at home or abroad.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF DeNOYER: Thank you.

On the question, Microphone No. 1. Anybody else on Resolution 415?

COMRADE JIM GOLDEN: Comrade Commander-in-Chief, Jim Golden, Post 1772, Senior Vice Commander from the Department of New Hampshire. I support the opposition.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF DeNOYER: Any further discussion? We are going to vote on Resolution 415. For approval of Resolution 415, all in favor will say "aye"; all opposed. The "ayes" have it.

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF BANAS: Comrade Commander-in-Chief, I now move for rejection of Resolutions 427, 428, 430 and 432.

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF MUELLER: I second the motion for the rejection of these Resolutions.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF DeNOYER: Is there any motion regarding those rejections? Is there any motion regarding those rejections?

Microphone No. 3.

COMRADE MICHAEL MUSGROVE: Commander-in-Chief, Mike Musgrove, a delegate from Post 2350, Elko, Nevada. We don't have Resolution 432 in our books. I was just wondering what it was.

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF BANAS: Resolution 432, comrades, is a Resolution to amend the Uniformed Service Former Spouses Protection Act. That was recommended for rejection in favor of Resolution 412, which we have already passed.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF DeNOYER: Any further discussions on these rejections? If not, they will stand rejected.

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF BANAS: Commander-in-Chief, this concludes the National Security and Foreign Affairs Committee Report.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF DeNOYER: Thanks a lot, Ed.

REPORT OF SUBCOMMITTEE ON POW-MIA

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF JOHN GWIZDAK: Comrade Commander-in-Chief, I am here to represent Past Commander-in-Chief John Smart, who is under some medication at the present time and was asked to remain in his room. So, as Vice-Chairman, I am going to give you the report.

I am pleased to report that the POW-MIA Subcommittee met at the Reno/Sparks Convention Center on Sunday, July 22, 2012, in a combined meeting with the National Security and Foreign Affairs Committee. Your instructions were followed, all members were present or accounted for, and action was taken on the resolutions assigned to that Committee.

I would like to thank National Security and Foreign Affairs Chairman and Past Commander-in-Chief Ed Banas, and Vice-Chairman and Past Commander-in-Chief Jim Mueller for their expertise and extensive knowledge on these issues.

I also extend the Committee's gratitude and my personal appreciation to our advisors, Joe Davis from the Washington Office and Debra Anderson from the National Headquarters.

Commander-in-Chief, the Committee carefully reviewed and deliberated each Resolution. I will now read the three Resolutions that the Committee recommends for approval. If any delegate would like a Resolution set aside for discussion, please so indicate after I have completed the approval segment of the report and it has moved for

adoption.

Resolution No. 421, POW-MIA Full Accounting Mission Funding was approved as amended. I will read the reason. This resolution was written when plans to restart recovery operations in North Korea were announced earlier this year. Three weeks later North Korea continued their missile threats and the operations were cancelled.

In the last sentence of the third "Whereas", the words "have resumed" need to be replaced with the words "could resume."

Resolution 422, Preserve Integrity of U.S.-Russia Joint Commission, the Committee recommends approval.

Resolution 423, Call for More Vietnam POW-MIA Unilateral Action, the Committee recommends approval on Resolution 423.

I now move that Resolutions 421, as amended, and 422 and 423 be adopted.

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF MUELLER: I second that motion that they be adopted.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF DeNOYER: Are there any set asides on those Resolutions? Any set asides on those Resolutions? On the question; on the question. All those in favor will signify by saying "aye"; opposed. The "ayes" have it.

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF GWIZDAK: Comrade Commander-in-Chief, this now concludes the POW-MIA Subcommittee Report. Thank you for the assignment.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF DeNOYER: The POW-MIA Subcommittee is dismissed. We thank them for their efforts.

We will move to the report of the Committee on Veterans Service Resolutions by its Chairman, Past Commander-in-Chief James Nier.

REPORT OF COMMITTEE ON VETERANS SERVICE RESOLUTIONS

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF NIER: Thank you, Commander-in-Chief. Your Convention Committee on Veterans Service Resolutions convened at 2:00 o'clock p.m., Sunday, July 22, 2012. Roll call was taken and preliminary matters were discussed. The Committee was divided into three Subcommittees to carefully deliberate each of the 41 Resolutions that were assigned.

The Subcommittees were established as follows:

Subcommittee I – Health, chaired by Daniel Crocker from Michigan and Vice-Chairman Kenneth Thie from Florida. Staff advisors were Dawn Jirak, Assistant Director, Veterans Health Policy, NVS, and Teresa Morris, Manager, Action Corps, National Legislative Service.

Subcommittee II – Benefits, chaired by Barry Walter from Illinois and Vice-Chairman Joy Mikyska, from North Dakota. The staff advisor was Gerald T. Manar, Deputy Director, National Veterans Service.

Subcommittee III – Economic Opportunities/Other, chaired by William Dozier from Maryland and Vice-Chairman Lee Kichen from Florida, who was excused. Staff advisors were Ron Krause, Associate Director, Field Operations, NVS, and Raymond Kelley, Director, National Legislative Service.

Before proceeding to the report, I wish to express appreciation to Bill Bradshaw, Director, National Veterans Service, and Ray Kelley, Director, National Legislative Service, for the valuable technical guidance which

they and their staff provided to the Committee.

I also want to thank Past Commander-in-Chief Tommy Tradewell from Wisconsin for serving as Vice-Chairman of this very important Convention Committee, and to Dawn Jirak, NVS Staff, who served as our Committee Secretary and coordinated the results of our deliberations.

Commander-in-Chief, with your permission, I will begin the Committee report by presenting those Resolutions the Committee recommends to be approved as written, then proceed to report those Resolutions that were approved as amended and, finally, I will conclude by presenting the Resolutions the Committee recommends for rejection. If, for any reason, you or the delegates to this Convention would like a Resolution set aside for further discussion, please so indicate after we have completed each segment of the report.

I will now proceed by reading the Resolution numbers and titles that the Committee recommends for approval as written:

No. 601 – Adequate Department of Veterans Affairs Budget.

No. 602 – Consider Treatment for a Presumptive Service Connected Condition as a Claim for VA Compensation.

No. 603 – Extending Gulf War Presumptions, Registry and Health Care to Afghanistan Theater Veterans.

No. 604 – Oppose VA Pharmaceutical Co-Payment Increases.

No. 605 – Nursing Home Eligibility.

No. 606 – Traumatic Brain Injury Health Care.

No. 607 – Veterans Employment and Training Programs.

No. 608 – VA Services for Women Veterans.

No. 609 – Extended Service Connection Presumption to Blast Survivors.

No. 610 – Veteran Entrepreneurship.

No. 611 – Ensure Compliance with the Department of Labor Transition Assistance Program Participation Mandate.

No. 612 – VA Claims Backlog.

No. 613 – Increase the Benefit Level for DEA.

No. 614 – PTSD Health Care.

No. 616 – Enforce Veterans Employment Law.

No. 617 – Burial Plot Allowance.

No. 618 – Hearing Loss Compensation.

No. 619 – Repeal SBP/DIC Offset.

No. 620 – Incident Reporting and Health Care for MST.

No. 621 – Homeless Veterans Priorities.

No. 622 – Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment Program Eligibility.

No. 623 – Veterans Preference – Job Training.

No. 624 – Veterans Affairs Pension Management Centers.

No. 625 – Make VA Fee Basis Payments and CHAMPVA Payments Fair to Providers.

No. 626 – Support Proper Funding for DVOPS/LVERS.

No. 627 – Quality Educational Outcomes.

No. 628 – Support Veterans Treatment Courts.

No. 632 – Headstone and Marker Medallion.

No. 634 – To Eliminate the VA Time Requirement for a Veteran to be Rated 100 Percent for Dependency Indemnity Compensation.

No. 639 – Inclusion of Veterans Traveling and Residing Abroad All-Inclusive Medical Service Under the Foreign Medical Program.

No. 641 – Vietnam Veterans’ Equity Act.

No. 642 – Additional Benefits and Services to Veterans Children with Spina Bifida.

Commander-in-Chief, I move to accept the Committee’s recommendation to approve these resolutions.

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF TOMMY TRADEWELL: I second the motion.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF DeNOYER: Do we have any set asides on these resolutions, any set asides?

I recognize Microphone No. 3.

COMRADE DENNIS LYDDY: Comrade Commander-in-Chief, I am Dennis Lyddy, Post 1807, Massachusetts. I request that 601 be set aside.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF DeNOYER: Resolution 601 will be set aside. Do we have any other set asides?

COMRADE ANTHONY CLASSE: A point of order. Comrade Commander-in-Chief, I am Anthony Classe, Post 10708, a delegate from the Department of Europe. There is no 642 in my book. There is no 642.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF DeNOYER: There is none in your book, is that what you are saying?

COMRADE ANTHONY CLASSE (Post 10708 – Europe): Yes. I would like to have it read.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF DeNOYER: It was handed out in Committee. Your Committee representative would have a copy. We are still on the set asides.

COMRADE NICK NELSON (Post 10046 – Alaska): We have a point of order. I don’t believe the motion was seconded.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF DeNOYER: The motion was seconded. It was seconded by Past Commander-in-Chief Tommy Tradewell.

COMRADE NICK NELSON (Post 10046 – Alaska): We didn’t hear it up here.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF DeNOYER: Yes, it was seconded.

COMRADE NICK NELSON (Post 10046 – Alaska): Thank you very much.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF DeNOYER: That is perfectly all right. It is understood. Any further set asides?

Microphone No. 1.

COMRADE RICH CESLER (Post 889 – Idaho): I would like to set aside No. 617.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF DeNOYER: Was that 617; is that correct?

COMRADE RICH CESLER (Post 889 – Idaho): That is correct.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF DeNOYER: Any other set asides? With the exception of those that have been set aside, is there any discussion on the rest of the resolutions? Is there any discussion on the rest of the resolutions? All in favor will signify by the sign of “aye”; those opposed. The “ayes” have it.

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF NIER: Comrade, No. 601 was recommended for approval by the staff and the Committee.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF DeNOYER: Any discussion on No. 601?

Microphone No. 3.

COMRADE DENNIS LYDDY (Post 1807 – Massachusetts): Comrades, I would like to make a motion to amend No. 601, since it is the very first Proposed Resolution that the Committee worked on. It needs to be

amended to specifically identify those individuals of our veterans that are married to same sex couples, to incorporate or enlarge the VA budget to handle said benefits, if one of those partners is a veteran and passes away.

If I were to have children that served this country and chose to marry somebody of the same sex, my veteran child dies, my son-in-law or daughter-in-law would not receive said compensation for the death of my homosexual child. I encourage the body to amend said motion to encourage Congress to identify the fact that we have repealed the Same Sex Act – “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell”, and these benefits will help our future veterans because we are all equal in a combat zone.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF DeNOYER: Is there a second? Do we have a second? We do not have a second so the amendment fails.

Any other discussion on No. 601? Any other discussion on 601? There being none, all in favor will say “aye”; opposed. The “ayes” have it. Thank you.

Any discussion on Resolution No. 617? Any discussion on Resolution No. 617?

Microphone No. 1.

COMRADE RICH CESLER: Comrade Commander-in-Chief, Rich Cesler, Post 889, Department of Idaho. I can assure you that if we endorse this, if endorsed by the Veterans Administration, it would be a bar and a commitment to bankruptcy. The burial plot allowance at this time was just increased October 1 to \$700. We are asking here that the plot allowance benefit be increased to \$6,160. I just believe that this is wrong. It is too much money, too much demand upon the VA resources.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF DeNOYER: Any further discussion? Any further discussion? There being none, we will call for the vote on Resolution 617.

All in favor will signify by saying “aye”; opposed. The “ayes” have it.

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF NIER: Commander-in-Chief, Vice-Chairman Tommy Tradewell will present those resolutions that the Committee recommends for approval, as amended, and those that are recommended for rejection.

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF TRADEWELL: I will read the resolution numbers and titles that the Committee recommends for approval as amended:

No. 615 – Tinnitus and Hearing Loss Presumptive Service Connection.

No. 630 – Prohibit Charging Fees to Represent Veterans before the Department of Veterans Affairs.

No. 635 – Enforce the Original “Health Care Eligibility Act of 1996.”

No. 640 – Service Connection for Traumatic Brain Injuries for Non OIF/OEF Veterans.

Commander, I move to accept the Committee’s recommendations to approve these Resolutions as amended.

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF NIER: Comrade Commander-in-Chief, I second the motion.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF DeNOYER: We have a motion made and seconded. Are there any set asides? Any set asides? Seeing none, all in favor will signify by saying “aye”; all opposed. The “ayes” have it. Thank you.

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF TRADEWELL: I will read the Resolution numbers and titles that the Committee recommends for rejection.

No. 617 – Burial Plot Allowance, rejected.

It was rejected on the floor, stated that the amount of money was incorrect.

No. 629 – Post Traumatic Stress, rejected.

Post Traumatic Stress Disorder is a medical diagnosis. All diagnosed psychiatric conditions are listed as disorders, nationwide, in accordance with the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM IV) published by the American Psychiatric Association and covers all categories of mental health disorders. It is not up to the VA to change the nomenclature of this medical condition.

No. 631 – Service Connection After 180 days, rejected.

It is unnecessary. In accordance with 38 Code of Federal Regulations, Section 3.304(b), Direct Service Connection; Wartime and Peacetime, Presumption of Soundness, the veteran is considered to have been in sound condition at entrance into the service, except for defects, infirmities, or disorders noted on the entrance physical, or where clear and unmistakable evidence proves that an injury, or disease existed prior and was not aggravated by such service.

No. 636, Minimum Compensation for Hearing Loss.

It was rejected in favor of 618.

No. 637 – Presumptive Service Connection for Tinnitus and Hearing Loss.

It was rejected in favor of 615.

No. 638 – VA Prosthetics was rejected.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF DeNOYER: Are there any motions on these rejected resolutions?

Microphone No. 3.

COMRADE RONALD RUSAKIEWICZ (Post 9460 – Connecticut): I ask that Resolution 629 be set aside.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF DeNOYER: You need to make a motion to adopt, Ron.

COMRADE RONALD RUSAKIEWICZ (Post 9460 – Connecticut): I make a motion that we adopt No. 629.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF DeNOYER: Do we have a second? Do we have a second?

COMRADE JOHN HOLLIS (Post 2083 – Connecticut): I second the motion.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF DeNOYER: We have a motion to adopt Resolution 629. On the question.

COMRADE RONALD RUSAKIEWICZ (Post 9460 – Connecticut): Commander-in-Chief, may we have the staff report on that, why it was rejected?

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF TRADEWELL: It was rejected because Post Traumatic Stress Disorder is a medical diagnosis.

COMRADE RONALD RUSAKIEWICZ (Post 9460 – Connecticut): Thank you very much. Comrade Commander-in-Chief, hearing that I will withdraw my motion. Thank you.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF DeNOYER: Does the seconder withdraw?

COMRADE JOHN HOLLIS (Post 2083 – Connecticut): I withdraw the second.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF DeNOYER: Thank you. Any other motions on these rejections? Any other motions on these rejections? Hearing none,

they will stand rejected. Thank you.

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF NIER: Commander-in-Chief, this concludes the Committee's report on Veterans Service Resolutions.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF DeNOYER: The Committee is dismissed. Thank you very much.

ADJUTANT GENERAL KENT: Comrades, the morning session tomorrow will start at 0800. Remember, we have the Republican nominee Mitt Romney speaking to us at approximately 1100. There will be magnetic monitors in the morning, but only four, so it will be a little crowded over there. You need to come before 8:00 o'clock.

CLOSING CEREMONIES

Sergeant-at-Arms, will you please perform the Closing Ceremonies for today's business session.

SERGEANT-AT-ARMS O'BRIEN: Yes, sir, Commander-in-Chief. Comrades, please rise.

National Chaplain.

BENEDICTION

NATIONAL CHAPLAIN HOLLAND: Almighty God, the hour has come when we must part.

We commit ourselves to Thy care. Thou, who are our strong tower of defense and our protection, grant that in life's battles we may be strong and brave, living such lives of stainless integrity as shall reflect honor upon our country, the Veterans of Foreign Wars, and glorify Thy great and holy name.

May Thy good providence shield us from all harm; watch over those who even now guard the gates of freedom; and bring us together again in true comradeship and peace. Amen.

SERGEANT-AT-ARMS O'BRIEN: Comrades, face the Flag of the United States and join me in the salute.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF DeNOYER: Thank you, Sergeant-at-Arms. We are in recess until 8:00 o'clock a.m. tomorrow morning. Have a nice evening.

(Whereupon, the Convention was recessed at 4:40 o'clock p.m., to reconvene on Tuesday, July 24, 2012, at 8:00 o'clock a.m.)

SECOND BUSINESS SESSION
TUESDAY, JULY 24, 2012

(The Second Business Session of the 113th National Convention of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, meeting in the Reno Sparks Convention Center, Reno, Nevada, was called to order at 8:00 o'clock a.m., with Commander-in-Chief Richard DeNoyer presiding.)

CALL TO ORDER

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF DeNOYER: Good morning, comrades. I will now reconvene the 113th VFW National Convention.

Sergeant-at-Arms, you will please conduct the Opening Ceremonies.

SERGEANT-AT-ARMS O'BRIEN: Yes, sir, Commander-in-Chief. National Officers and Comrades, please rise for the Opening Prayer followed by the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag of the United States.

Comrade National Chaplain.

OPENING PRAYER

NATIONAL CHAPLAIN HOLLAND: Our Heavenly Father, guide us as we do the work of America's veterans. Help us to lead our people in these matters.

We ask Thy blessings upon the soldiers, sailors, airmen, Coast Guardsmen and Marines, they who stand between us and the evil that would enslave us.

We thank you for the veteran, who has passed the torch to them who even now guard the gates of freedom. May we always remember those who have given their lives and limbs for us.

May God bless us all, may God bless his most perfect gift, the United States of America. Amen.

SALUTE TO COLORS AND PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

SERGEANT-AT-ARMS O'BRIEN: Comrades, please face the Flag of the United States and join me in the Pledge of Allegiance.

(Whereupon, Salute to the Colors and the Pledge of Allegiance were given at this time.)

SERGEANT-AT-ARMS O'BRIEN: Comrade Commander-in-Chief, the reconvening of this Convention has been completed and your orders have been obeyed, sir.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF DeNOYER: Thank you, Sergeant-at-Arms. Everyone please be seated.

I would now like to call on Betty Gripp for the report on the Credentials Committee.

REPORT OF CREDENTIALS COMMITTEE

COMRADE BETTY GRIPP (Department of Arizona): Good morning. Commander-in-Chief, Council members and delegates:

At the close of business 4:00 p.m. yesterday, July 23rd, 2012, the total delegates registering their credentials are:

Total Delegates, 8,998. Total Department Commanders, 48. Total Past Commanders-in-Chief, 24. Total National Officers, 36. That is for a Grand Total of 9,106. Total registered for the 113th National Convention, 2,540.
COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF DeNOYER: Thank you, Betty.

INTRODUCTION OF VFW NATIONAL HOME REPRESENTATIVES

SENIOR VICE COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF HAMILTON: One of the icons of the Veterans of Foreign Wars and its Ladies Auxiliary is the VFW National Home for Children in Eaton Rapids, Michigan. The National Home is a profound example of veterans helping veterans.

This morning we have with us the Home's wonderful leaders, Board President David Havelly of Indiana, Executive Director Patrice Greene, and most importantly our 2012 Buddy Poppy Child, Spencer Fleming who resides in the Georgia House.

Once again, in keeping with one of our great time-honored VFW traditions, our 2012 Buddy Poppy child will circulate among all the generous comrades in the meeting room and "pass the hat" on behalf of the National Home. So, please stick around and reach deep into your pockets. Your donation to such a worthy cause will help put a smile on Spencer's face this morning.

Dave, welcome, my friend. It is nice to see you.

REMARKS BY BOARD PRESIDENT DAVID HAVELY

COMRADE DAVE HAVELY: Good morning. We would like to thank Commander-in-Chief DeNoyer for inviting us here this morning. It is an honor to serve as your President of the National Home Board of Trustees. We have 12 elected Trustees who serve the National Home Districts, and we also have five ex-officio Board members and Trustees. They include the Adjutant General, "Gunner" Kent, they include Quartermaster General Bob Greene and, of course, they include the Commander-in-Chief Richard DeNoyer. Thank you for your hard work and commitment to the children and families of our veterans.

We thank the Commander for his leadership of the Veterans of Foreign Wars. We thank both he and the National President Gwen Rankin, for creating the 2011-2012 Commander and President project for the National Home.

Your Department Commanders and Presidents worked together in generously donating funds to the first pathway of the new Tribute Park, which we dedicated in June.

The beautiful bronze plaque in the park lists all the names of the Commanders and Presidents, and will be their tribute forevermore.

On behalf of the Board of Trustees, we thank you. We thank all of you, the generous and loyal members of the Veterans of Foreign Wars across the country.

As Trustees, we meet the children and families who you are helping. As members of the Veterans of Foreign Wars and the Ladies Auxiliary, we can be very proud of what we do for our beautiful home.

It is now my honor to introduce to you the National Executive Director of the National Home, Patrice Greene. (Applause)

REMARKS BY EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR PATRICE GREENE

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR GREENE: Good morning. If you think it is kind of early for all of you, imagine what it is like to get a number of teenagers up this time of day.

We congratulate Commander-in-Chief DeNoyer for his service on behalf of America's veterans. This year the VFW National Home for Children marked its 87th year of caring for the children and families. That is a wonderful tribute to all of you.

The founders of the National Home held a firm belief in honoring the services and sacrifices of those who have gone before us, and also in strengthening foundations for future generations.

Today's VFW and its Ladies Auxiliary and the National Home Board of Trustees share that belief.

Will you, please, begin the video.

(Whereupon, the video is shown at this time.)

The new Tribute Park at the National Home that President Havelly spoke about symbolizes these two essential values and provides a way for all of us to demonstrate these two fundamental beliefs. With the Tribute Park, we have a beautiful and lasting way for the homes and supporters and donors to honor special people in organizations, and their tribute gift will generate financial support for the National Home for years to come.

We were so pleased to dedicate this wonderful park last month, and we thank Richard and Gwen, and all of their Presidents and Commanders who made that Tribute Park a reality.

We invite all of you to come and see the Tribute Park at your National Home and meet the children and families that you are helping if you are able. With your help, so many children and families have overcome hardships and have been strengthened at the National Home.

We have thousands of visitors each year, and everyone is in awe of all that you have done.

I would like to just take a minute now for a little personal remark about someone who has really contributed a great deal over the last several years to the National Home. Larry Maher, Quartermaster General, has served as an ex-officio Trustee member of the Board for the past seven years. For the past seven years, he chaired the Finance Committee of the National Home.

Larry has been a tremendous asset to us providing his expertise in budget review, general finance, audit, and investment analysis. He has faithfully attended every Board meeting and his advice was straightforward and sound.

Larry always took care to ensure that all Board members' opinions were listened to and that all Board members were informed. He was a positive and contributing influence on the Home's Board of Trustees and his leadership will long be remembered and appreciated.

I personally thank Larry. If he is here in the audience, I thank you, Larry, for your years of hard work. (Applause)

Larry, we want you to know that we will always think of you as National Home family. Thank you.

We have a workshop this afternoon from 3:00 to 4:00, and I know this is a very long day for everyone. The Patriotic Rally is after that. We are going to keep it short to one hour, but there will be a lot of information there, so we hope that you can come to that.

Then tonight, at the Patriotic Rally, we have some special members again of the National Home campus. Right now I would like to introduce the leadership of the National Home Chorus, Misty Botke and Brian Lorente. (Applause)

MS. MISTY BOTKE: Good morning. It is such a pleasure that we get to come to represent the National Home, and that is our way to give our thanks back to everyone that gives to the National Home and prays for the National Home. So, I would like to introduce Brian. My name is Misty Botke. I am a house parent in the New York house, and this is Brian Lorente.

MR. BRIAN LORENTE: Good morning, everybody. Once again, I want to say thank you for having us. We appreciate it and thank you for everything that you guys do for the National Home.

My name is Brian Lorente, and I am the high school coordinator at the home, and I have been at the home for about 11 years. We would like you to meet the chorus real quick.

(Whereupon, the chorus was introduced at this time.)

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR GREENE: As you know, the chorus is going to perform tonight, so please come and cheer them on.

It is now my pleasure and honor to present the 2012-2013 VFW National Home Buddy Poppy Child, Spencer Fleming. (Applause)

REMARKS BY 2012-2013 BUDDY POPPY CHILD –
SPENCER FLEMING

BUDDY POPPY CHILD FLEMING: Thank you. Hello. My name is Spencer Fleming, and I am 11 years old. I am going into sixth grade, and I live with my mom and two brothers in the Georgia House at the VFW National Home for Children. I think my family's house is really nice.

I do not live in Georgia, but I think it is really cool that my family gets to live in the Georgia house at the National Home. I like living at the National Home because it is a fun, peaceful place and you know you can trust the people around you.

My mom works and goes to college. She works really hard and makes sure my brothers and I are happy.

We have a new park at the front of the campus called Tribute Park. It has cool fountains with paths and other neat stuff. We are not allowed to ride our bikes and skateboards in the park, because it is a special park for memories of special people. We can ride them everywhere else, though.

I am thankful to be a part of such a friendly community and for the trips and activities that I get to do. Like State Days, Cedar Point and 4-H, where I raised my hog "Sloppy Joe."

Last fall, I even got to travel to New York City to celebrate the Statue of Liberty birth date with the Ladies Auxiliary. It was an amazing trip. Besides 4-H, I like being outside, video games, sports, Milenge Club band, PE, drawing and spending time with my family.

I also collect hats and statues. In school, my favorite subjects are math, gym, art and music. When I grow up, I want to be a zoologist, because I love animals. I hope to see you at tonight's Patriotic Rally, because I will be singing with the choir this year. Thank you. (Applause)

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR GREENE: We have some presentations to Commander-in-Chief DeNoyer. I know he is with the Ladies Auxiliary right

now, so we are going to present them to Senior Vice Commander-in-Chief John Hamilton.

SENIOR VICE COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF HAMILTON: We will see that he gets it.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR GREENE: First of all, we have a shirt with his name on it.

SENIOR VICE COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF HAMILTON: Thank you so much. I will make sure that the Chief gets it. I know he will appreciate that.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR GREENE: We have provided him with a shirt with the Commander's name on it, so John can't take that. He can't take this next one, either.

Many of you know we have a beautiful brick walkway at the National Home and we have over 2,000 bricks already in that walkway. We just started the program a couple of years ago. It is a very popular program. We hope that this brick in Richard DeNoyer's honor will hold a special place in his heart. (Applause)

We have one more gift, and this is to be presented to the National Headquarters. Because of all the growth and change that has occurred at the National Home over the last few years, we thought that you would really appreciate having a new aerial view framed of the National Home for the headquarters. So, we will present that now. (Applause)

Lastly, I almost forgot this, this is a photo collage of the times that Richard has been at the National Home, and it includes the walkways that the Presidents and Commanders under Richard and Gwen's leadership placed in the Tribute Park. So, this will be given to Richard as well. (Applause)

SENIOR VICE COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF HAMILTON: Thanks to the National Home. Let's give them a round of applause. (Applause) Reach in your pockets as they come through and let's tie this little Buddy Poppy Child up.

...Convention Announcements...

INTRODUCTION OF VETERANS AFFAIRS SECRETARY ERIC SHINSEKI

SENIOR VICE COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF HAMILTON: It is now my honor to introduce the Secretary of Veterans Affairs, General Eric Shinseki.

The General is a 1965 West Point graduate who served two tours in Vietnam, first with the 25th Infantry Division from 1965 to 1966, and then with the 5th Cavalry Regiment from 1969 to 1970.

Twice he was wounded, but instead of going home, he soldiered on to rise in rank and responsibility to command a squadron, a brigade, the 1st Cavalry Division, the 7th Army, and then in 1999, as the 34th Chief of Staff of the United States Army.

He retired in June 2003 after successfully leading the Army during the early days of Operation Enduring Freedom and Operation Iraqi Freedom.

Today, he leads the second largest federal department that is solely tasked with honoring a nation's promise to her veterans.

In his three years at the helm he has added new herbicide exposure presumptions, eased the PTSD claims process, and greatly increased programs to better care for women veterans, rural veterans, and especially

those who are homeless.

Through his stellar leadership and vision, he continues to transform the way his department conducts business, most especially inside the Veterans Benefits Administration. And though the VA still has many challenges, he always does what is right for America's veterans and their families.

I am proud to say the VA has no stronger advocate than the VFW on Capitol Hill, in the White House, and all 1,400 communities where there is a VA facility.

Comrades, I present to you a fellow combat veteran, the recipient of two Purple Hearts and three Bronze Stars for Valor, the former Chief of Staff of the United States Army and now Secretary of Veterans Affairs, Eric Shinseki. (Applause)

REMARKS – SECRETARY OF VETERANS AFFAIRS ERIC SHINSEKI

VA SECRETARY SHINSEKI: Thank you all very much, Senior Vice Commander-in-Chief John Hamilton, thank you for that kind introduction and congratulations on your election as the next Commander-in-Chief. I look forward to working with you on making things better for veterans.

To Commander-in-Chief Richard DeNoyer, thank you for your many years of devotion to veterans and for your significant leadership of the VFW this past year. God speed to you and your family as he turns over leadership to John.

Let us also acknowledge National Adjutant "Gunner" Kent, National Executive Director Bob Wallace, National Service Director Bill Bradshaw, and the other members of your VFW leadership.

To Gwen Rankin, President of your VFW National Ladies Auxiliary, let me offer my thanks for the unwavering support the Auxiliary has provided to veterans and their families for 100 years now. Congratulations to her and your members, past and present, on reaching such a distinguished milestone of service on behalf of America's veterans.

Other members of the VFW, fellow veterans, VA colleagues, distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen: I am greatly honored to be addressing an organization that has been for well over a century now, a powerfully-important voice for veterans' rights in the halls of Congress, in the Oval Office, and across the country. Bob Wallace has been your diligent representative and our reliable partner in doing what is needed.

I am especially honored to be following President Obama, who addressed you yesterday, to thank you and your families for your patriotism and service to the Nation. The President's commitment to veterans was clear from our first meeting. It is genuine, it runs deep, and it is unwavering. His vision to transform the VA resonated with me when we first met in November of 2008. His initiative to provide veterans and families better transitions from the military, better health care, especially mental health; faster and more accurate processing of compensation claims; better educational opportunities, job counseling, employment opportunities; that's why I am proud to be here today to report to you on the state of your VA.

Let me review how things looked three and a half years ago, what changes we have put into motion since, and where we are headed in the future.

Three and a half years ago, the country was heavily engaged in two

operations, the first major war of the 21st century being fought by a smaller all-volunteer force. Repeated deployments of that force have created issues that don't show up until later deployments. It takes a superb, disciplined fighting force to handle this kind of strain. The men and women who wear our nation's uniforms today, as they have in the past, are magnificent. More of them are surviving catastrophic injuries because of improved body armor, better combat life-saving skills, and rapid medical evacuation from battle zone to state-side hospitals.

But higher battlefield survival rates also mean more complex casualties, the compounding effects of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder, PTSD, Traumatic Brain Injury, TBI, and multiple amputations, five quadruple amputees from the war, with complications of blindness and deafness and genitourinary injuries. We had to create a word for this – Polytrauma, and we have since built five Polytrauma Centers of Excellence, the best in the world, and an entire system of polytrauma care to treat these patients and enable them to go home.

Three and a half years ago, we were also still grappling with unresolved issues from two past wars, the Gulf War, over 20 years ago, and the Vietnam War, nearly 50 years ago now. We didn't take care of business back then, when we should have, and some veterans were dying without benefits.

Three and a half years ago, 107,000 veterans were estimated to be homeless in this rich and powerful country. The President has said, "We won't be satisfied until every veteran who has fought for America has a home in America." But this rich and powerful country has suffered an economic downturn the likes of which we have not seen since the Great Depression, and certainly not in my lifetime. In spite of a collapsing economy, the President was determined not to let veterans' homelessness spiral out of control.

In 2009, there were over 23 million living veterans in this country, but only 7.4 million of them were enrolled in VA health care and only 3 million were receiving compensation and pension benefits from VA. With less than a third of the veteran population enrolled in the VA, we had an outreach problem. We knew it. Many didn't know about VA or their possible benefits. We had an access problem. Even if they knew about us, they had difficulty getting the service they needed. And we had, even then, a backlog in disability claims, one which has been there for decades.

Well, that was the landscape in 2009, and we needed to put things into motion. We immediately focused on three key priorities that came out of my talks with a variety of stakeholders. Bob Wallace and I, and the executive directors of the five other major VSO's, still meet near monthly today. These priorities are unchanged:

Increase veterans' access to VA benefits and services; one-third market penetration is not good enough.

Eliminate the backlog in disability claims in 2015.

And end veterans' homelessness in 2015.

Folks tighten up whenever you tag dates to goals, meaning the sense of urgency is just probably about right.

The first order of business was to establish closer, more collaborative working relationships with DoD. As I often remind folks, very little of what we do in VA originates in VA; most of it originates in DoD. It takes both departments to create a seamless transition for separating servicemembers

to return home “career ready” to live, work, raise children, and contribute to restoring the strength of our economy.

The Secretaries of Defense, Bob Gates and Leon Panetta, and I have personally met nine times in the past seventeen months. Leon Panetta is a dedicated public servant, who has been insightful, decisive, and a good friend to me and to veterans, as has Bob Gates. Tomorrow, Secretary Panetta and I will testify together before a joint hearing of the House Armed Services and Veterans Affairs Committees perhaps for the first time.

Our second priority was to fix the VA's budget process. You can't create change without resources, and money is firepower. For the past three and a half years, VA has presented compelling arguments for strengthening VA's budget, and the President has been stalwart in his support.

In 2009, the VA inherited a budget totaling \$99.8 billion, a good budget, not spectacular, but a good one. In 2010, the President increased our budget to \$127.2 billion, a near 30-percent increase in a single year. The President's 2013 budget request, currently before the Congress, is for \$140.3 billion, a 40-percent increase since 2009.

During this period of economic downturn, few private-sector businesses and few federal departments have sustained the kind of budget growth. In a discussion about values, I was once lectured, “Show me your budget and I'll tell you what you value.” Now, by that standard, there is no question where the President stands. He gets it, he understands our obligation to veterans. He has provided VA the budget that allows for meaningful change.

So what have we put into motion these past three and a half years? First, we took care of some long overdue business. I call this cleaning up the battlefield.

For you Vietnam veterans, we granted presumption of service connection for three new Agent Orange-related conditions: Parkinson's disease, hairy cell and other chronic B-cell leukemias, and ischemic heart disease. Welcome home.

For you Gulf War veterans, we granted presumption of service connection for nine diseases associated with Gulf War illnesses for veterans of Desert Storm and Afghanistan. While we must continue to research what might have caused this illness, our responsibility is to diagnose and treat symptoms of these verifiable diseases.

And for all combat veterans with verifiable PTSD, World War II, Korea, Dominican Republic, Vietnam, Granada, Panama, Somalia, Operation Desert Storm, Iraq, Afghanistan, and others, we granted the presumption of service connection for PTSD.

These three decisions alone have dramatically expanded access to VA medical care for hundreds of thousands of veterans. In addition, we have mounted an aggressive outreach campaign to educate servicemembers and veterans about VA's capabilities and their benefits. Since January 2009, enrollment in VA health care is up by nearly 800,000, a ten-percent increase. That's great news, that means we are expanding access.

And in expanding outreach and increasing access to VA healthcare, we also, understandably, increased the number of compensation claims, also good news. Veterans who previously had no access are now enrolling and submitting claims.

Three and a half years ago the total claims inventory was roughly 400,000. Today it's approximately 880,000. The backlog, the number of

claims older than 125 days, was about 135,000 in 2009 and is roughly 580,000 today. Growth in these numbers, total number of claims and backlogged claims, is what happens when we increase access. But it was the right thing to do for Vietnam veterans, for Gulf War veterans, and for combat veterans of all wars.

One last snapshot of the claims backlog. In 2009, we completed 900,000 claims decisions, but took in one million claims in return. In 2010, we completed for the first time one million claims decisions, and took in 1.2 million claims. In 2011, we again produced a million claims decisions, but took in 1.3 million claims in return. Now look, if the total number of claims today is 880,000 and we generated nearly three million claims decisions over the past three years, you know that today's inventory and backlog are not the same claims that were there three years ago, two years ago, not even a year ago. Now, there are sure to be a handful of exceptionally complex cases, but the process is dynamic.

It's also a big numbers process, and we do most all of it on paper. Paper is what we receive from DoD. With the planned draw-down of up to a million troops over the next five years, the number of new claims will continue to grow. It will take both departments for VA to go paperless. Hence, my close working relationship with Secretary Panetta, he and I are pulling our departments into the future on topics like this.

You heard the President yesterday, "solve the backlog." We are working hard and smart to solve this correctly. We already have a new automation tool called VBMS, the Veterans Benefits Management System, being piloted at two regional offices for over a year now. We will have it up and running at 16 regional offices by the end of this year, and in all 56 regional offices by the end of 2013. We are also redirecting 1,200 of our most senior claims adjudicators, 37 percent of our experienced staff, to the backlog, which ballooned while I asked them to focus on the 250,000 Agent Orange claims they just completed. The same folks have to handle these claims.

I have committed to ending the claims backlog in 2015 by putting in place a system that processes all claims within 125 days at a 98-percent accuracy level. With the President's strong support, we have the resources we need and we are on track to do it.

To further increase access, we have added 57 new community-based outpatient clinics, 20 more mobile health clinics and our fifth Polytrauma Center opened in San Antonio last year. We have four new hospitals under construction, in Denver, Orlando, Las Vegas and New Orleans. We will open Las Vegas on August 6th, the first new VA hospital opened in 17 years, and provide veterans and service members stationed nearby the state-of-the-art facility they need and deserve. As the President said yesterday, "We keep our promises."

We have also invested heavily in new telehealth-telemedicine technologies to overcome the tyranny of distance and extend our reach into the most remote rural areas where veterans live. Enhanced IT technologies are also making it easier for veterans to make appointments, access their medical records, and find out about available benefits and services.

We have placed full-time women's veterans program managers at 144 medical centers to advocate for women veterans, and named women veterans coordinators at all 56 regional offices to assist women with their claims. Since 2009, we have opened 19 clinics designed specifically to

serve women, and provided training in women's health to more than 1,200 health-care providers.

We have also increased access to our national cemeteries, opening three new national cemeteries and 14 new state cemeteries. Additionally, five more national cemeteries are planned, as well as five columbaria-only cemeteries in urban areas, and eight burial grounds in rural areas, owned and managed by VA but collocated with non-VA cemeteries. As some of you know, for the past 10 years, NCA has been the top-rated public or private customer service organization in the country, according to the University of Michigan's American Customer Satisfaction Index, outperforming Google, Lexus, Apple, all the others, is not a surprise when nearly three-quarters of NCA employees are veterans.

In 2009, I told you that veterans led the nation in homelessness, depression, substance abuse, suicide, and they rank right up there in joblessness as well. As I mentioned earlier, 107,000 veterans were estimated to be homeless in 2009. By January 2011, that estimate was down to 67,500. We believe that when the Department of Housing and Urban Development announces its 2012 estimate sometime before the end of the year, that the estimated number of homeless veterans will be below 60,000, keeping us on track to break 35,000 in 2013 and moving to end the rescue phase of veterans' homelessness in 2015.

The prevention phase of defeating veterans' homelessness is ongoing and requires VA to focus all our capabilities to keep an invisible "at risk" population of veterans and families from slipping into that downward spiral that ends up in homelessness. We have over 900,000 veterans and eligible family members in training and education today --universities, colleges, community colleges, tech schools, and in the trades. Part of our prevention mission is to see them all graduate. Everyone who flunks out in this economy is at high risk of homelessness. So my one-word speech to any student veteran audience is "Graduate". If I sound like your dad, I am. I am paying most of your bills. So, graduate.

In 2005, at the height of operations in Iraq, we had 13,000 mental-health professionals handling the healthcare needs of our veterans. Today, we have over 20,000. We recently announced that we were hiring another 1,600 to increase our ability to address the growth in mental health requirements spawned by a decade of repetitive deployments.

We know that when we diagnose and treat, people usually get better, and the long-term trends of our treatment efforts are good. Among the 8.6 million veterans enrolled in VA health care, the number receiving mental health treatment is up. At the same time, for veterans who receive treatment, our suicide rates are coming down, an indication that treatment, including evidence-based therapies, works.

However, too many veterans still leave the military with mental health issues we never find out about, because the issues weren't noted in their DoD records or because veterans never enrolled in VA's healthcare system. Most veterans who commit suicide, perhaps as many as two out of three, were never enrolled in VA. As good as we think our programs are, we can't help those we don't treat, another reason two secretaries meet regularly, and another reason increasing access is so important.

One of the most successful outreach efforts is our Veterans' Crisis Line. DoD knows it as the Military Crisis Line, the same number, the same trained VA mental health professionals answering the phone, no

cost to DoD. Since start up in 2007, over 640,000 people have called in, including over 8,000 active-duty service members. We have made over 99,000 referrals for care and rescued over 23,000 from potential suicide. Some younger veterans are more comfortable with chatting and texting, so in 2009 we added an online chat service and in 2011 a texting service.

We have worked to ensure greater collaboration between VA and DoD, especially in that critical phase before servicemembers leave the military. We simply must transition them better. We do this best with warm handoffs between the departments, that is key to preventing the downward spiral that often leads to homelessness and sometimes to suicide. Last year we completed expansion of our joint DoD/VA Integrated Disability Evaluation System from the original 27 sites to 139 sites, a major improvement towards a seamless transition to veterans status. But there is still more VA and DoD can do together.

Secretary Gates and I worked these initiatives hard, and Secretary Panetta and I have worked them even harder. We are both committed to a fully-operational integrated electronic health care by 2017.

Good jobs are essential for veterans, and we are proud to have partnered with the First Lady's Joining Forces Initiative and the U.S. Chamber of Commerce's Hiring Our Heroes Campaign. The President, the First Lady, and Dr. Biden have provided strong leadership in increasing employment opportunities for veterans and spouses of military members. The President challenged private companies to hire or train 100,000 veterans and spouses by the end of 2013. They have already received commitments from 2,100 companies for 175,000 hires, and 90,000 veterans and spouses have already been hired.

The VA has also joined private companies and other departments like Defense, Homeland Security, Transportation and Labor in efforts to hire veterans and assist others in hiring them. You know, 300,000 work at VA, and over 100,000 of them are veterans.

In January, our hiring fair in Washington, D.C., attracted over 4,100 veterans, resulted in over 2,600 on-the-spot interviews, and more than 500 job offers on one day. We followed that success with an even bigger hiring fair last month in Detroit, in conjunction with our National Veterans Small-Business Exposition. Over 8,000 veterans participated, more than 5,700 were interviewed, and over 1,200 received job offers on the spot.

Simultaneously, 3,500 people participated in the Veterans Small-Business Training Exposition. It was our opportunity to bring veteran small business owners into direct contact with our acquisition decision makers so they could better understand our procurement requirements, demonstrate their capabilities, and improve their ability to prepare competitive proposals for government contracts. It also increased the opportunity to hire unemployed veterans, because veterans hire veterans.

So where are we headed? I intend to be here to update you again next summer, and here is what I intend to report:

We will have increased spinal cord injury funding by 28 percent between 2009-2013. By 2014, that increase will likely be 36 percent.

We will have increased TBI funding by 38 percent between 2009-2013. By 2014, that increase will likely be 51 percent.

We will have increase mental health funding by 39 percent between 2009-2013. By 2014, that increase will likely be 45 percent.

We will have increased long-term care funding by 39 percent between

2009-2013. By 2014, that increase will likely be 50 percent.

We will have increased prosthetics funding by 58 percent between 2009-2013. By 2014, that increase will likely be 75 percent.

We will have increased women veterans' funding by 123 percent between 2009-2013. By 2014, that increase will likely be 158 percent.

We will have increased OEF/OIF/OND funding by 124 percent between 2009-2013. By 2014, that increase will likely be 161 percent.

Our Veterans Benefit Management System will be fully operational at most regional offices, and just 40 percent of claims will be older than 125 days.

Now, who doesn't think the President gets it down deep where it counts? "Show me your budget and I'll tell you what you value." There is no question that our President highly values what veterans, their families and our survivors have meant to this country.

God bless our country, God bless our President, and may God continue to bless the men and women who serve and have served this nation so honorably and valiantly in uniform. Thank you all very much. (Applause)

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF DeNOYER: Mr. Secretary, I am sorry I wasn't here to greet you. Thank you for coming.

VA SECRETARY SHINSEKI: Thank you. It is my pleasure.

INTRODUCTION OF LIEUTENANT GENERAL CLAUDE "MICK" KICKLIGHTER

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF DeNOYER: Our next guest, Retired Army Lieutenant General Claude "Mick" Kicklighter, was selected to oversee the Vietnam 50th Anniversary Commemoration Program. The program has five objectives:

To thank and honor veterans of the Vietnam War, including personnel who were held as Prisoners of War or listed as Missing in Action, for their service and sacrifice on behalf of the United States and to thank and honor the families of these veterans.

To highlight the service of the armed forces during the Vietnam War and the contributions of federal agencies and governmental and non-governmental organizations that served with, or in support of, the armed forces.

To pay tribute to the contributions made on the home front by the people of the United States during the Vietnam War.

To highlight the advances in technology, science, and medicine related to military research conducted during the Vietnam War.

To recognize the contributions and sacrifices made by the allies of the United States during the Vietnam War.

Lieutenant General Kicklighter served 35 years in the U.S. Army and retired in 1991. He had two tours of duty in Vietnam: From February 1966 through February 1967, with the 1st Logistical Command, and from August 1970 to August 1971 as Assistant Chief of Staff, G-4, for the 101st Airborne Division.

He has commanded at all levels through division command. He served as the Commander, U.S. Army Pacific; Commander, 25th Infantry Division; and the Commander of the U.S. Army Security Assistance Command. He also served as the Director of the Army Staff.

Lieutenant General Kicklighter's military awards include the

Distinguished Service Medal, the Defense Superior Service Medal, the Legion of Merit and the Bronze Star Medal.

Since retiring from active military service, Lieutenant General Kicklighter has continued to serve the nation in a number of senior positions with the Departments of Defense, State and Veterans Affairs. He has received the Presidential Citizens Medal, the Eisenhower Liberation Medal, Decoration for Exceptional Civilian Service, and is a two-time recipient of the Department of Defense Medal for Distinguished Public Service. Most recently, he served as the Director of the Center for Infrastructure Protection and Homeland Security at George Mason University.

Lieutenant General Kicklighter also served as the Executive Director of the United States of America's 50th Anniversary of World War II Commemoration Committee. During the 1991-1995 commemoration period, the Committee planned and hosted events that honored the veterans, their families, and those who served on the home front; and the Committee encouraged the study of the history of this period. Further, Lieutenant General Kicklighter provided oversight for the writing of the plan for the commemoration of the 50th Anniversary of the Korean War.

Comrades and sisters, please give a warm welcome to an outstanding leader and fellow Life Member of the Veterans of Foreign Wars, Lieutenant General "Mick" Kicklighter. (Applause)

REMARKS BY LIEUTENANT GENERAL "MICK" KICKLIGHTER

LIEUTENANT GENERAL KICKLIGHTER: Thank you, our National Commander. This is a great welcome and it's like a homecoming to be back with so many friends and so many colleagues that I have been able to work with throughout the years.

What I have been asked to do this morning is to give you an overview of the program to help a grateful nation to finally properly honor and thank our Vietnam veterans and their families, and especially families who lost loved ones.

On this slide you will see the official Vietnam Commemorative Flag. I wish I had time to describe the symbolism of it to you, but it is taken right out of the law and it is taken out of your service. But, I think the most important part of this flag is the bottom phrase. This comes from your nation. It says, "A grateful nation thanks and honors you, you, the Vietnam veterans, for your service, valor and sacrifice."

On this next slide, you will see the agenda that I plan to briefly discuss with you this morning. First of all, I would like to give you a little bit of background how we got into this commemoration. I think you would be interested in knowing that we have a law that tells us how to do it, and our National Commander outlined for you what the objectives of that law are for, us to follow.

I will describe the mission and then very quickly I will talk about this 13-year program of thanking and honoring our Vietnam veterans, and especially the families and the Gold Star Families. As I close, I would like to share with you a little bit about the opening ceremony we conducted at the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington, D.C., on Memorial Day.

Congress passed a law in 2008, and they said to the Secretary of Defense, you will have the mission to coordinate and to support this across

our nation, and you will involve all of the nation.

In 2011, the Secretary of Defense established the Executive Agent for this program and he kept it inside his office. The Director of Administration and Management, Michael Rhodes, is the Executive Director. Then we chose Memorial Day this past year to announce to the nation that this program is underway and to also publish a Presidential Proclamation.

We have copies of this proclamation for you at our booth if you would like to have one. The public law says that this President will be every veteran's warrior, Centrix. It will stay focused all the way through the programs. We will do a lot of things, but the main focus is to thank and honor our veterans and their families, and especially families who lost loved ones in that war and families who still have family members who are unaccounted for.

We will also not be satisfied with this program until we feel that we have made every effort that every Vietnam veteran feels like that their nation has said thank you for your service and your valor, and your sacrifice 50 years ago.

On this slide, you have already heard from our National Commander what the objectives are, and I want to assure you that our effort, and remember this is not really a DoD program, this is a national effort. We are the recruiters, the organizers, the facilitators, but this is a national effort that will occur all across our nation. But we will stay focused on these objectives and our number one objective, as you see in this chart, is to remember the veterans and their families, the prisoners of war, the unaccounted for, families who lost loved ones in that war.

The mission statement that we have derived from this, and we have talked about it, it really is a summary of the objectives. We are going to stay veteran-focused. We are going to be focused on the warriors and what they accomplished on the battlefields that they were assigned to.

We will remember the families. Again, we will not be satisfied — this will be very hometown centered. We want to go where the veterans live and thank them in hometown America.

That's why the veterans service organizations and the VFW will play such a key role in all of this.

I thought it would be good for you to kind of understand the momentum and how we planned to conduct this commemoration.

Phase I is a phase that we are in now, and this will run until 2014. I will describe some of the things that we are planning to do, just some highlights. But this is the recruiting, the building, the organizing, getting in place the things we need to do to properly involve the whole nation.

Then the execution phase where we really are going to hometown America, to thank our veterans and their families will take place in 2015, '16 and '17. We hope to have events occurring continually throughout this period all across this great land and with our allies as well.

One of the objectives you have heard our National Commander say is that we will work with our allies of that war throughout the commemoration.

Then the sustainment phase, after we build up to this momentum, runs from 2018 to 2025. This is where we will put in place all the things that we need to do to make sure that we properly reflect this generation's contributions to our nation. Its legacy has never been properly reflected.

The next few slides I will quickly run through some of the things that

will happen during the phases, and when I get through the phases I will give you a few highlights that occurred at our opening ceremony on Memorial Day.

We have already done that. That was one of the objectives. We are now in the process of recruiting organizations like yours, your Posts, your States all across our nation to get organizations involved, the military involved to help us support activities that will occur throughout the whole period.

I would like to make one point is that in any ceremonies that we have that are focused on the 50th Anniversary of Vietnam, we will remember all our of veterans who served in all of our wars. They will not be left out. This generation knows what it feels like to be left out. They will not be left out.

We will remember in all of our ceremonies the men and women who are on our battlefields today. We have already established an inter-agency working group, which is primarily all the services, the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Departments of Veterans Affairs, Transportation, Homeland Security, which is the Coast Guard, and then very shortly we will be expanding this to bring in veterans from each service from that war and the Chairman of their Advisory Committee will be a Vietnam veteran who will oversee and hold us accountable to make sure that we have achieved the objectives which our Congress has tasked us to do and things that we will think about.

One of the key things that we will strive to do is to work hand in glove with our Veterans Service organizations, and we have already begun to do that with the VFW. I will talk about that a little bit at the end.

The next slide talks about some of the things that we have got underway now. We can raise money, we do have a treasury account that we can build up funds, so we are planning to mint coins. We are working with the Postal Service to put out postal stamps about this war. We are also building exhibits that we can send out to events in your locations and your hometown that will be a permanent Vietnam exhibit in the Pentagon.

One of the corridors on the A-ring, which is 300 feet long, 20 feet wide, will be walking through kind of a time capsule of Vietnam. It will be very historically correct and very professionally done.

We hope that all of you someday will have a chance to walk through that corridor. It is in the design stage now.

One thing we want to make sure we do not do, and that is not forget the Vietnamese who evacuated and escaped that country and are now U.S. citizens.

Through all of our phases, we will work with and support our allies, and I am sure they will support us.

Let me just describe briefly how the expenses are organized. We are working very closely with this inter-agency group. We have met about ten times so far, and it includes memberships from all the services, at the Lieutenant General Assistant Secretary level, and then we will have veterans involved at all ranks, and anybody that the services feel is a good representative of those services. They will keep us on track.

The Pacific Command will be supporting events that take place in Hawaii, Alaska and the Pacific Region. The Northern Command will be supporting events all over the Continental United States. I will describe a little bit more about what that support will be like.

Then the Joint Forces Headquarters in the National Capitol region will support events that tap in the Washington, D.C., area. As this organization has led the way in our country, education is going to be very important.

We are going to work hand-in-glove with what you have already done and what you are doing in the schools.

We want to make sure that working with you and others we make available to teachers in grades seven through eleven, and colleges and ROTC Departments all across this land very professional educational materials.

One thing we will be doing also is doing DVD recordings of our veterans to capture their stories that will be around for a long time. Unfortunately, some of those great stories we have already missed, but we will have available for teachers to invite in the classroom some very distinguished veterans with some very unique stories.

As we continue and start Phase II, again the focus will be on our five objectives, keeping the veterans and their families up front. In this phase, we are asking every commemorative partner in every location that they are in to do at least two events each year in their hometowns to thank and honor veterans and their families. We want to assist in doing that in ways that we will talk about later.

We will distribute educational materials through the commemorative partners and in educational institutions. We will continually be working close with our allies. We are going to assist Congress to conduct a joint meeting of Congress where the House and the Senate will come together and thank the veterans of the Vietnam War and their families in a joint meeting.

Let me just describe a little bit about what the military organizations will be doing to support the effort that you will have going on in hometowns of America. All the commands will support state, regional and local events. Each military installation will be asked to conduct one open house each year during this Phase II period, where they will not only thank and honor the Vietnam veterans, but all veterans. They also will be providing speakers, color guards and bands.

We will have service bands that will be able to put on shows in places around the country. It is something like Bob Hope did in Vietnam.

We are asking all the military units that are still on active duty forces to have one homecoming where they invite the veterans and their families to come back to their division or their wing, or their ship to commemorate this period.

The Guard and Reserve Units are all over the nation, and they will be recruiting and supporting the communities they live in.

Now, we come to Phase III, and the final phase. We have got a tremendous momentum going. In these last seven years, we want to do everything we can to keep that momentum going, and making sure that if there is anything that we didn't do right during Phase I and II, we can make that correction in Phase III. We will continue to support our commemorative partners and something that you do that I just applaud so much is that you have kept the spotlight on making sure that we have the fullest accounting for those that are still missing.

In working with you and other organizations, we want to make sure that that is one of our highlights. We will also, in this final phase, ensure that the educational materials properly reflect the legacy of your service in Vietnam.

You won all the major battles, you did all your nation asked, you served where duty called and duty assigned you, just as your forefathers had done

in all our previous wars, and just as your children and your grandchildren are doing now.

We want to make sure that that legacy is properly recorded for all history to see in the future. So, education and history, and getting your legacy right, is going to be a very important part of this.

Let me now close with just a few remarks about the Memorial Day event. I have a few quotes from the speakers of that day. As you see on this chart, you see the opening ceremony. Let me recap some of the things that took place that day.

Attending was President and Mrs. Obama, Vice-President and Dr. Biden, Secretary of Defense, the Secretary of Veterans Affairs, the Secretary of Interior, the Deputy Secretary of State, much of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. Chuck Hagel, who was a young Sergeant serving in the 9th Division in Vietnam, was one of the speakers. All the senior leaders of our service was there.

As I mentioned earlier, Tom Selleck, a Vietnam era veteran, was the Master of Ceremonies. We had 4,500 guests attend, veterans.

The VIPs at that event were not the luminaries, but the VIPs at all our events will be the Vietnam veterans and their families. The VOSs laid wreaths at the beginning of the ceremony and the closing before the final fly-over. All the senior leaders that participated and were there that day escorted Gold Star family members from each of the services that laid a wreath in honor of the names that were on that wall.

Those, as I said earlier, were the Secretary of Defense and the co-host was the National Parks Service and the Vietnam Veteran Memorial Fund.

On this next slide, you will see a copy of the proclamation. As I mentioned earlier, if you would like a copy of this proclamation we have it in our booth. If you don't get by our booth, we will be glad to send it to you. But this was the first time that anybody had seen or heard this proclamation.

We asked the Congressional Medal of Honor recipient, First Lieutenant Brian Thacker from Vietnam to read the proclamation. That was kind of the beginning of the ceremony.

Let me read for you a short quote from that. "This will be a 13-year program to honor and give thanks to a generation of proud Americans who saw our country through one of the most challenging missions we have ever faced. While no words will ever fully be worthy of their service, nor any honor truly befitting their sacrifice, let us remember that it is never too late to pay tribute to the men and women who answered the call of duty with courage and valor. Let us renew our commitment to the fullest possible accounting for those who have not returned."

Then on this next slide you see President Obama, as all the senior leaders did, escorting a Gold Star family. Here you see President and Mrs. Obama escorting Ms. Rosemary Brown, the widow of specialist for Leslie Sabo during the wreath laying in the last part of the ceremony. Specialist Sabo was only awarded that Congressional Medal of Honor two weeks early. He was killed in Vietnam, serving in the 101st Airborne Air Mobile Division, and his records had gotten lost, but that award was found and his wife accepted it along with his brother.

Let me just read a few excerpts from the President. The President was the keynote speaker. He is our Commander-in-Chief. This is a couple of sentences from his remarks. By the way, if you want to see this ceremony, it

is on our website and you can view it whenever you like.

Now, 4,500 people did attend the ceremony. It was carried live on three networks across the nation, and about 1,200 people watched it live on our website. Here are a few excerpts from the President's remarks.

"One of the most painful chapters in our history was Vietnam. Most particularly, how we treated our troops who served there. You were blamed for a war you didn't start when you should have been commended for serving your country with valor. You were sometimes blamed for the misdeeds of a few, when the honorable service of the many should have been praised.

"You came home and sometimes were denigrated when you should have been celebrated. It was a national shame, a disgrace that should have never happened, and that's why today we resolve that it will never happen again."

On this next slide, you see Secretary Panetta, who was the host, as I mentioned, escorting Ms. Sarah Frances Shea. She is the 93-year-old mother of Major Donald Shea, U.S. Air Force, who is still missing in action from Vietnam. This mother has waited 42 years for her son to come home.

Let me quote a few lines from Secretary Panetta's remarks that day. "Many more came home from the war to this country that failed to fully acknowledge their service and their sacrifice, and failed to give them the honor they so justly deserve. That experience, that failure to thank those who were willing to put their lives on the line for their country was burned into the soul of my generation. For too many years, veterans, the recognition of their bravery came too late. The Vietnam generation, my generation, is grading now, but this commemoration effort gives this country an opportunity today and in the years ahead to try and right the wrong in the past, to remember those who have served in this war and what they did for us in the service and the sacrifice they made on our behalf."

On this next slide, you see a few days later commemoration at the wall. Secretary Panetta, arriving in Vietnam, and we believe the results of the Memorial Day event helped prepare him for that trip. As a result of that trip and the improvement of bilateral relations with Vietnam, Vietnam opened up three previously restricted areas so that we can do joint POW-MIA operations and maybe a few more of our unaccounted for will now come home.

This next slide is our Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff who was one of the briefers. In this slide, you see General Marty Dempsey escorting Mr. Dave Klinker, who is the brother of Captain Mary Klinker, an Air Force Nurse who gave her life in Vietnam. She is one of eight women who died in that war, and she was killed on the aircraft that crashed during "Baby Lift."

Let me just quote a little bit and I will close. Let me quote a little bit from his remarks. I will paraphrase a little bit. General Dempsey said, when he was a 16-year-old dishwasher in a restaurant in upstate New York, a young Army Captain named John Graham came home from the Vietnam War. Captain Graham became one of his heroes and inspired him to choose the profession of arms. So, he went to West Point, and in his plebe year, his first year, Captain Graham was killed on the second tour in Vietnam. He said at the end of his remarks, "Whether they served in Vietnam or Iraq, or Afghanistan, whether they returned home or still

waiting their homecoming, there is no difference in their courage and their sense of duty. All of our servicemen and women, and all of our wars are alike.”

Shortly after I was selected to this position, I was visited by the senior leadership, our Commander-in-Chief, our Senior Vice Commander-in-Chief, our Junior Vice Commander-in-Chief, our Adjutant General, Bob Wallace visited with us several times, and the message to me from the Vietnam veterans of America and the VFW, that message from the VFW was that no organization will ever do more to support this commemoration than will the VFW.

This program needs the VFW senior leadership. It needs our Ladies Auxiliary, especially it need our Posts in hometown America to make sure that you recruit, that you lead, that you organize, and you help us support the events where the veterans live. We are counting on you to do that.

Our Vietnam veterans in this great nation need that support. I know that you will do it. You have done it in all of our commemorations.

As I close this morning, let me quote just one line from a poem from a Vietnam veteran.

“It matters not what politicians argue; it matters not what history would reveal.

“We had no expectation but to serve where duty called us, and we ask no reward except a nation’s thanks.”

God bless all of our Vietnam veterans, God bless their families, God bless all of our veterans, and especially bless our troops on the battlefield. God bless America. We need you and we will do it together. (Applause)

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF DeNOYER: Thank you very much, General. It is nice to have you here. Thank you for coming.

PRESENTATION OF DISTINGUISHED SERVICE MEDAL AND CITATION TO PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF RICHARD EUBANK

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF DeNOYER: During his 24 years with the Veterans of Foreign Wars, Past Commander-in-Chief Richard Eubank amassed a distinguished record of service to our nation, community and to our organization.

As VFW Commander-in-Chief, Chief Richard was determined and unwavering in his commitment to America’s veterans and to our nation’s service members.

Throughout his year as VFW National Commander, Richard proved to be an aggressive spokesman for all those we serve. He went above and beyond his duties. Traveling the world to defend our veterans and those who have been lost in battle, he has proven himself to be among our finest.

For that, and his many years of dedicated service, we owe a forever lasting debt of gratitude to him. Please join me in honoring Past Commander-in-Chief Richard Eubank with the Distinguished Service Medal and Citation.

ADJUTANT GENERAL KENT: “Distinguished Service Medal and Citation awarded to Richard L. Eubank in lasting appreciation and spirited recognition of an extraordinary record of outstanding and stalwart service to the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States.

“His many accomplishments as an exceedingly involved and active member, including successful duties at the Post, District and Department

levels ultimately culminating as the Commander-in-Chief.

“His admirable and noteworthy commitment to the VFW, along with the professional presence with which he performed his duties, are in the finest tradition of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States.

“In Witness Whereof, we have hereunto set our hands and the official seal of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, this 24th day of July, 2012.”

This has been signed by Richard L. DeNoyer, Commander-in-Chief, and Allen “Gunner” Kent, Adjutant General. (Applause)

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF DeNOYER: Do you want to say a few words, Richard? You can, if you want.

RESPONSE – PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF RICHARD EUBANK

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF EUBANK: First of all, thank you for this prestigious award. To all the veterans that each and every day we fight for what we promised we will fight for, our veterans and will continue to do the job. I ask you once again to fix your bayonets and get muddy and bloody. Thank you. (Applause)

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF DeNOYER: Thank you very much, Rich. On my behalf, I can say it was an honor and a privilege to serve with you.

INTRODUCTION OF MAJOR GENERAL JOHN HERRLING

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF DeNOYER: The long and admirable record of service of the United States Army is lasting testimony to the solid commitment of the men and women who have worn its uniform. For more than two centuries, they have protected America’s values and principles of freedom and whenever called upon by our Nation, U.S. soldiers have served with remarkable sacrifice, bravery and valor.

The VFW holds true to the verity that the effort to preserve and celebrate the Army’s history of service to the nation is essential to the people of this great country we will never forget. This is why the VFW has pledged \$500,000 to the campaign for the National Museum of the United States Army.

This museum will be a place where history, achievement, courage and sacrifice will become real for all people and will be a lasting link to the millions of American men and women who have proudly worn the uniform of the United States Army.

The VFW’s commitment will help ensure the museum’s goal of officially opening in 2015 become a reality. We can think of no better way to pay tribute to our soldiers, past, present and future, than to do our part to help safeguard the stories of their dedication, as well as the overall spirit of the Army.

The VFW is thrilled to be able to assist in this project. A major facet of our mission as an organization is to ensure those who have gone before us in war are remembered and honored properly. This museum will do just that and much more. And we anxiously await the opening in 2015.

Here today to talk a little more about the museum is Retired Major General John Herrling, Executive Director of the Campaign for the National Army Museum. (Applause)

REMARKS – MAJOR GENERAL JOHN HERRLING

MAJOR GENERAL HERRLING: Thank you, Commander-in-Chief DeNoyer, and thank you, Adjutant General Kent. Ladies and gentlemen, I am going to take just a few minutes of your time this morning and talk about the National Museum of the United States Army. Let me try to focus it this way. If you are a Marine and you come to Washington, D.C., you have got a wonderful new museum that has been open for about four years now. If you are in the Navy, on Pennsylvania Avenue there is a beautiful sailors memorial and there is a National museum at the Navy yard.

If you are in the Air Force, you have got a world-class museum on Wright Patterson Air Force Base in Ohio.

Now, if you are a soldier, you are a G.I. and you come to Washington, there is no memorial, there is no museum, no national museum to honor your time of service and to honor your service in general.

So, the Army is trying to change that. I am not going to go through the 237-year history of the United States Army. It began before our country began in 1775. We didn't have a Constitution until 1776. But look at it from a historical perspective. No Army, no revolution, no America, and the Army, as you can see on the rest of that slide, has been involved in just about every war in the last two centuries.

Now, 11 wars, 185 campaigns, and we are still at it along with the other services in Afghanistan and other places around the world.

It is interesting to note that most of the cities and towns west of the Mississippi River started out as Army Posts. The roads, the railroads and canals were all surveyed by Army Engineers and surveyors, and the Army was the first to start aviation in the United States.

There is a lot of history here, and again I am not going to go through it. Where is it going to be located? The Army has given 41 acres of primary land just on the periphery of Fort Belvoir in Virginia. I know most of you know where the Pentagon is. If you come south on 395 and continue on I-95, the most traveled highway on the East Coast anyway, between I-95 and Route 1, along the Fairfax County Parkway will be the site for the National Museum of the United States Army.

By the way, it is only five miles from Mount Vernon. This slide gives you a brief overview of what that 41 acres is going to look like. It is easily accessible off the parkway. You will have ample parking, and it is going to be environmentally friendly. The heating and air conditioning will be provided by geothermal wells. It will grant the museum at least a silver certification.

You can see in addition to a large parade field and stands, there is a memorial garden, an amphitheater, and then down at the bottom of this slide, the museum is 185,000 square feet. There are four words here, I think, encapsulate what we are trying to do with this National Museum. Again, the visitor, educate the visitor, not on the Army, but on the history of our country. Honor those that have served. Then inspire a new generation to service their country.

This is a floor plan for the first floor of the museum. You can see where the entrance is. Now, to the right there is a very unique facility called the Experiential Learning Center. When we go around and talk to industry and American corporations, they say we are falling farther and farther behind in science and technology. We need to get young people interested in those

disciplines early on. How early? Middle school.

You have got to focus them on science, technology, engineering and math at that age so when they get to high school they have got a little bit better focus on it.

One of the major companies in the United States feels so strongly about this that they have donated \$10 million to this Experiential Learning Center. It is going to be all high-tech; it is going to be Internet technology. It is going to have light tables, touch screens. You learn what you need to do about those disciplines so that you can solve a problem later on.

To continue, it will have a gift shop, it will have a café and terrace. It will have a large Army theater in the round where you will get an overview of the Army in a 15 to 20-minute presentation.

Now, it is going to be unusual, because it is going to be 360 degrees, and they are trying to put it in three dimensions. That is tricky. You can put three dimensions on a flat surface, but when you try to take a put three dimensions on a curved surface, it provides some technical problems.

The gallery at the top of the page, the Army and society is going to be very unique. It is going to surprise a lot of visitors. It is going to talk about how the Army supports society, but conversely how society supports the Army. It is going to talk about innovation and intervention. It will be a production of the Wright flyer in the museum. The Wright flyer put on a demonstration for the Army at Fort Myer, Virginia, in 1908, and based on that demonstration, the Army bought the first Wright airplanes. That was the beginning of the Army aviation.

Also in there is going to be a reproduction of an R-4B, which was the first helicopter that Igor Sikorsky ever built. It was built in 1943, and it was used in the China, Burma, India Theater in 1944 and 1945.

So, again, I think there will be a lot of things that will surprise visitors in this particular gallery. The large gallery on the right is fighting for the nation. The distance between the top wall and the bottom wall on that gallery is 300 feet, the length of a football field. It will start at the top with the Revolutionary War, the Civil War, the World Wars, and take you all the way through the history of the Army down into the current battlefields that we are experiencing in Afghanistan.

Now, there are two more unique features, I think, to this particular museum. Up on the third floor, there is going to be a Veterans Hall. We just decided when we sat down and talked about this museum that we wanted a special place for veterans to gather, veterans, their families, veterans service organizations, other organizations. It is a multi-purpose 7,000 square foot room. It can be used for formal dining, it can be used for a lecture, it can be used for just casual informal gatherings.

But it is a place for veterans to gather. Now, if you walk out the door and cross the corridor, if you walk out into the Medal of Honor Rooftop Garden. We just felt there needed to be a place in this museum to honor the recipients of the Medal of Honor. Of course, we are honored today to have one of those Medal of Honor winners with us, Colonel Bruce Crandall.

So, I think these are two additional unique features to this museum. This just gives you another view of it and what we want to do.

Now, we have got great support for this museum. Congress passed the legislation to authorize the museum, and also passed legislation for an Army commemorative coin. We get good support from the Commonwealth

of Virginia, and also from Fairfax County where the museum will be. We have got 94,000 individuals who have reached into their pockets and supported the museum through contributions.

We have also got a registry of the American Soldier. I would like to point out that website. If you go on to www.usarmyhistory.org, there will be a dog tag on there that says "Registry." Click on that, and you can put in there your history as a soldier, or someone in your family's history as a soldier.

If you would like, you can also put in a photograph of that individual in uniform. Again, we have had great support from Veterans Service organizations, and I think none has been better than the support we get from the Veterans of Foreign Wars.

Commander-in-Chief, thank you very much for that. That is terrific.
(Applause)

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF DeNOYER: It is our pleasure, General.

MAJOR GENERAL HERRLING: These are just some quotes from the Secretary of the Army, from the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs, and from the Major of the Army and the Chief of Staff of the Army. I won't bother to go by and read them. They say exactly what you think they would say. They are very supportive of an Army Museum, and something that is long overdue.

We now have the national spokesperson. Joe Montegna agreed about five months ago to be our national spokesperson, and in the photograph on the right you see Joe, and the fellow next to him is Brigadier General Creighton Abrams, who is the Executive Director of the Foundation. Next to him is Uncle Willie. Uncle Willie is a World War II vet of Patton's 3rd Army. He is 90 years old this year. He is doing very well.

We are also going to have a commemorative brick program for that long walk from the parking lot into the museum. We will start selling those bricks sometime this fall.

In one of the exhibit halls we have got a booth there, and you can go there and get additional information on that. In summary, the Army doesn't have a National Museum in its nation's capital. We want to engage the visitor, educate, honor the service of those who have served and their families, and most importantly the American people.

We have raised almost \$70 million to date, and that's going along very well. I would just like to once again thank this group, the Veterans of Foreign Wars, the Ladies Auxiliary, and each and every member who has contributed to this National Museum for the Army. I hope when it is opened that you are all able to go there and see these great exhibits. Thank you very much. (Applause)

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF DeNOYER: Thank you, again, General. We appreciate it.

INTRODUCTION OF THE JAMES E. VAN ZANDT CITIZENSHIP AWARD, CHERIE REID

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF DeNOYER: It is now my pleasure to introduce and recognize the recipient of this year's VFW James E. Van Zandt Citizenship Award. Cherie Reid, Director of the "Kids Thank a Veteran" program, whose purpose is to show the men and women who have served in the United States military that children care.

But the program is much more than just that, its website includes an enormous amount of information covering veterans, the United States military, the American Flag, veterans' holidays, United States Military Academies, groups that help veterans, women in the military, veterans memorials and cemeteries, teacher activities, patriotic songs and crafts, books to read and photos of our veterans, and all of these wonderful resources for America's youth are absolutely free. That's something that in today's world is rare and is certainly appreciated.

Is it possible to teach children to respect those who fought for the freedoms we have today. Cherie believes it is, one child at a time, and her efforts are paying off. Forty-eight states currently have children who are registered on the program's website, along with 14 states that are including "Kids Thank a Veteran" material in either their websites, curriculum or teacher communications.

Cherie embodies the VFW's mission to educate our youth about America and instill a deep sense of patriotism that they will carry for a lifetime. For that, we can think of no better way to honor her than by presenting her with this award today.

Comrades, I present to you the recipient of the 2012 VFW James E. Van Zandt Citizenship Award, a truly wonderful individual, Cherie Reid. (Applause)

ADJUTANT GENERAL KENT: "VFW James E. Van Zandt Citizenship Award, Gold Medal of Merit and Citation awarded to Cherie Reid in special recognition and sincere appreciation for her tireless efforts with the "Kids Thank a Veteran" program, which encourages children to show the men and women who have served in the United States military that they care. The program's website and its vast resources ensure that any parent, teacher or child has easy access to material about America and her veterans.

"Her exemplary dedication toward teaching America's youth about America and instilling them with a strong sense of patriotism and true to the ideals, traditions and values of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States has earned our deepest appreciation and respect.

"In Witness Whereof, we have hereunto set our hands and the official seal of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, this 24th day of July, 2012. Approved by the National Council of Administration."

This has been signed by Richard L. DeNoyer, Commander-in-Chief, and Allen "Gunner" Kent, Adjutant General. (Applause)

RESPONSE – MS. CHERIE REID

MS. REID: Thank you, and good morning. I wanted to just take this a little bit farther and tell you about a program that "Kids Thank a Veteran" did.

We decided we needed to get some kind of project that children could get involved in that would definitely thank our veterans. So, back a few years ago, we decided to make a butterfly tree. It is now considered an official memorial. My husband was very instrumental in building it.

It is 11 feet tall. It weighs over 300 pounds. It was at Arlington National Cemetery on display. It is now at the VFW Headquarters in South Carolina.

The butterfly tree is a representative of children from 31 states, ages 4 to 17. Each child made a butterfly to represent a young man or woman that

died in Iraq and Afghanistan. At this point, there are over 6,400 butterflies with name, age and rank of every soldier that has been killed.

As far as we know, it is the only completed memorial for Iraq and Afghanistan in the United States. It definitely is the only one made by children.

The main thing with the butterfly tree was to make sure that every soldier was honored. We have a motto, "The life of a butterfly is short, but its impact on the world cannot be measured." That became our motto for the butterfly tree, because these young men and women who sacrificed so much died much too young, but their impact and importance for our world cannot be measured. Thank you. (Applause)

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF DeNOYER: Thank you, Cherie. I should also mention that this award also came along with a \$2,500 honorarium as well. (Applause)

PRESENTATION OF THE AERONAUTIC AND AEROSPACE AWARD TO MS. WALLY FUNK

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF DeNOYER: It brings me great pleasure to introduce our next guest to you. Ms. Wally Funk has been one of the most influential women in aviation history, and she has the background to prove it.

She has a passion for flying that is extremely inspiring. Not many people have the will and passion to follow their childhood dreams, but Wally did.

As a young girl, she would wear a Superman cape and pretend to fly by jumping off her father's barn into a pile of hay, and determined to learn to fly one day.

Not only has she learned to pilot nearly every type of plane, she has taken her passion and energy for it and turned it into something priceless, teaching.

After receiving many degrees from various colleges and universities, among them earning her commercial single engine land, multi-engine land, single engine sea, instrument, flight instructor's and all ground instructor's rating at Oklahoma State University, she took her first job at the age of 20 at Fort Sill, Oklahoma, as a civilian flight instructor of commissioned and non-commissioned officers of the United States Army.

To date, as a professional flight instructor, she has soloed more than 700 students and put through thousands of private, commercial, multi-engine, sea plane, glider, instrument, CFI, AL and air transport pilots. She has logged more than 18,000 hours of flying time. We are so impressed by her remarkable skills and passion for flying, we couldn't be more thankful to have had her instruct so many of America's finest pilots in the United States military.

She is truly a pioneer for women in aviation; she helped pave the way for women through the years and has the records and stories to prove it.

In recognition of her outstanding ability, accomplishments and service to her community, country and profession, Wally was selected as one of the "Outstanding Young Women in America" in 1965, and later she was listed in "Who's Who in Young Women in America" and "Who's Who in Aviation."

Wally, we would like to congratulate you on all of your well-earned

and deserved success. You have served as a true inspiration for women and for all of us. We especially want to thank you for your service to the community and to our troops.

Please help me welcome Ms. Wally Funk to the stage as we recognize her with the 2012 VFW Aeronautics and Aerospace Award. (Applause)

ADJUTANT GENERAL KENT: Aeronautics and Aerospace Award, Gold Medal and Citation awarded to Wally Funk in honored recognition of her distinctive life-long career in aviation and her exuberant spirit which made her a pioneer of women.

“Her devotion to teaching pilots in the United States Army to fly, her many records and accomplishments and her extreme passion for aviation have justly earned her the utmost appreciation and admiration of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States.

“In Witness Whereof, we have hereunto set our hands and the official seal of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, this 24th day of July, 2012. Approved by the National Council of Administration.”

This has been signed by Richard L. DeNoyer, Commander-in-Chief, and Allen “Gunner” Kent, Adjutant General. (Applause)

RESPONSE – MS. WALLY FUNK

MS. FUNK: Wow, he took my whole speech. Good morning. Good morning. Commander-in-Chief DeNoyer, what a wonderful guy. I am so elated to be here and know more about the VFW.

I am sorry, but you are going to hear some of this stuff again. All you wonderful VFW members, women’s auxiliary and military people, I will probably leave somebody out, friends and family and guests: Thank you for coming here today. I am very humbled to receive this award. Your Aeronautics and Aerospace Award is the greatest honor that anyone in the world of aviation can ever have. Thank you, all of you.

The thrill of my life was teaching at Fort Sill, in Oklahoma. I am wondering, do I have any students out there? I taught about 500 or 600 while at Fort Sill. You never know who is in the audience.

So, I flew Generals in a Cessna 195 to New York to go on business. They said, “Wally, can you fly around the Statue of Liberty?” I said, “You bet.” I don’t know the word “no”. I go for it.

I was just out of college, so I was just a kid when I had that stuff in me. When I think of my personal accomplishments, the groundbreaking in the field of aviation for women, in the way past. You have to think about the W.A.S.P.s and what they did and where they have all come, now. It is a great touch that the military women pilots, the women fighter pilots and the women astronauts, how far they have come.

Sally Ride, I know you are looking upon us. (Applause) She was a good friend of mine, and she did wonderful things for the kids down in San Diego.

To all of you in advance, thank you for your service to our country. Thank you for my freedom, thank you for me having the vision and the personal dreams that I hold so dear.

Well, where did I come from? You probably are wondering. I was born and raised in Taos, New Mexico, in the high mountains, 7,000 feet, and skied at 12,000 feet.

As it was mentioned, I knew exactly at five years of age what I wanted

to do. I got on that cape and I jumped off that barn, but I didn't understand gravity. I had to wait a few years.

I owe much of my success and guidance and love to my parents, who throughout my entire aviation career gave me the determination and the great gift of confidence. I don't see that today in parents and grandparents. I would love to see it.

I was never allowed to have any fears, and I never said "no". The spirit of Taos Mountains gave me the knowledge of life and a great spirit of freedom.

As a free child, I played with the Taos Indians, rode horses, my bike, fished, shot guns, slept under the stars, learned how to make fire, and eat out in the open of the mountains.

Now, what more could a kid want? I had that great freedom. I was creative. I made balsa wood airplanes and hung them from my ceiling. My mother tried to give me those dolls but that didn't work. I built bridges out of my erector set, and learned how to be an engineer. I had just the great knack of fixing things. Mother would let me be outside, and I was never in the kitchen. I have not been there yet.

I guess I had my own direction in life. As you know, I was sent to Stephens College in Columbia, Missouri. Yea, Columbia, yea, Missouri.

I soloed at 16 and got all the rest of my licenses. Now, as you know, at Oklahoma State -- Oklahoma, where are you? (Applause) At that particular time when I left Fort Sill, there was a program started, as you know, of the Mercury Seven. There were 100 guys that took the test at Lovelace Clinic in Albuquerque, and seven made it. So, Lovelace said, and General Flickinger said, "What do you think the girls can do?" They said, "Let's grab them up." They took 25 girls and 13 passed. I was one of the 13.

There are many books out there about the Mercury Thirteen. I was the kid. I was the youngest. (Applause)

My parents had to sign me in and then we were dedicated to never say anything about the tests that we were given. Folks, you don't know what pain is for one week, 97 tests, testing all of my body internally, externally. I broke records from the guys. I stayed on that bicycle more than any of the guys did, peddling for 10 hours and 35 minutes. I stayed in tanks for over 11 hours. I was given every test that they needed, and when Eileen Collins went up into space, she said, "Wally, thank goodness you took all those tests because we didn't have to go through that grueling time and be a guinea pig." (Applause)

So, this has been a secret from '61 to '95 that you-all didn't know about. Now, it is coming out. It is written, television is rolling. So, it is coming out. I was chief pilot in California and many states. I was the first girl FAA Inspector in Santa Monica, the first girl on the National Transportation Safety Board conducting over 400 failed accidents in my area. I went on to be a pilot of all sorts of vehicles and an airline captain.

With over 18,600 hours, I still teach people to fly. I like the youngsters. I have been very focused, I have always wanted to go higher, faster and further, which is going to come up with Sir Richard Branson and his Virgin Galactic. That is hopefully next year.

I have been with four different companies that have promised me the world, and guess what, they did not make the vehicles. Bert Ratan, out at Mojave, has made the vehicle and I hope that I will be going up in White Knight II and in Space Ship II and rocketing off to up to around 7,800

miles. That is my dream for space, folks.

In closing, I want to say thank you again to the VFW for having me. Commander DeNoyer, thank you. (Applause)

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF DeNOYER: Thank you very much.

MS. FUNK: But I also want to thank Roy. You did it, baby, and Diane, who is sitting in watching all of this. Stand up, Diane. You are in an office back somewhere in the back. I want to thank everybody. I have learned so much being with the Texas folks and meeting all of you here. You are wonderful.

God bless you, God bless America and thanks for letting me be here and share my story. (Applause)

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF DeNOYER: Thank you, Wally. We appreciate you being here. (Applause)

INTRODUCTION OF JOINT POW/MIA ACCOUNTING COMMAND – MAJOR GENERAL STEPHEN TOM

Our next guest leads the one organization that is charged with finding, identifying and returning home to their families our fallen warriors.

Major General Stephen Tom assumed command of the Joint POW/MIA Accounting Command in January 2012, and as I understand it, his trip here is one of his last days prior to retiring after 41 years of great service to our great nation.

He was commissioned a Second Lieutenant through the Army ROTC program in 1971 after graduating from the University of Michigan, and received his Juris Doctorate Degree in 1974 through the Boston University School of Law.

With a prestigious law degree in hand, the Army, of course, sends him to the field artillery officer's basic course, then on to the Adjutant General Corps, as well as civil affairs. Prior to assuming command of JPAC, General Tom was the Chief of Staff to the United States Pacific Command.

JPAC has no better friend than the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States. We have sent our leadership to Southeast Asia every year since 1991, to Russia since 2004, and now into China. We have pushed to have JPAC funding not only restored but increased to match a new congressional requirement that would more than double the current number of identifications they make each year. We, who have been there, understand how formidable their task is to try and account for 83,000 missing servicemen in some of the most remote parts of the world. Even though we know JPAC will never find them all, we still rejoice on every new identification, because it means an American family somewhere is finally getting to welcome their loved one home.

Comrades, please welcome the Commander of the Joint POW/MIA Accounting Command, and Life Member of VFW Post 3457 in Saipan, Major General Stephen Tom. (Applause)

REMARKS – MAJOR GENERAL TOM, JPAC

MAJOR GENERAL TOM: Thank you, Commander-in-Chief DeNoyer, for the kind introduction. On behalf of the soldiers, sailors, airmen and Marines, and civilians that comprise the Joint POW/MIA Accounting Command, or JPAC, thank you for inviting me to speak today.

I am humbled and honored to speak to the VFW, a grassroots organization who passionately shares the same values of loyalty, duty, respect, selfless service, honor, integrity and personal courage as I have in my Army career.

I would like to also thank the VFW for all it has done for the veterans and the families of our missing in action in the past, what you are doing for them today, and what you will be doing for them in the future. No one does more for veterans than the VFW. (Applause)

I have had the honor to be the Commander of JPAC for about two and a half years now, and throughout my tenure many questions have been asked of me about JPAC, its mission and its operations. The questions about JPAC usually fall into the categories of who, what, when, where and why.

I am not sure how much each of you know about JPAC, but today I thought I would discuss the top ten questions that I have been asked about JPAC in hopes of expanding your knowledge about our organization. So, let's start off with the "who" questions.

Who is JPAC and who are we looking for? The answer is JPAC is a 453 military unit made up of soldiers, sailors, airmen, Marines and civilians, whose mission it is to search for, recover and identify American POW/ Missing in Action servicemen, specifically from World War II, the Korean War, the Vietnam War and the Cold War.

We are the only U.S. military unit conducting MIA's search recovery and identification operations.

Next is the "what" questions. What is JPAC's track record to recover and make identifications of our MIAs? The answer is since JPAC and its predecessor units began its work in 1973 at the end of the Vietnam War, we have been able to identify 1,797 U.S. servicemen. (Applause) That is 1,797 servicemen. We average about 80 to 90 identifications each year.

So what are JPAC's greatest challenges today? I am asked that a lot. Let me talk about that in a couple of challenges.

First, JPAC is in a race against time to recover and identify our MIAs and return them to their families. This is because their closest relatives are getting older and in Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia, the acidic soil is dissolving bone remains more each day, making our recovery efforts even harder.

One of my other major challenges is expanding the capacity and capability of JPAC to meet the mandate of Congress in its 2010 law called the National Defense Authorization Act of 2010.

Commander-in-Chief DeNoyer made mention of that in his introduction. This law requires JPAC and the entire DoD accounting community to increase identifications of MIAs to 200-plus annually starting in fiscal year 2015. This 200 number represents almost tripling of our current annual rate of identifications. So, what has JPAC done to meet this requirement of this 2010 law? Well, the answer is we have crafted a plan to build the capacity and capability to identify this 200.

We have obtained future increase funding programs to add more personnel and laboratories based on making the additional identifications.

So, I am asked what keeps you up at night at JPAC as its Commander? My first and overarching worry with it is the safety of JPAC's men and women who are deployed around the world to search and recover our MIAs. They are sent to some of the most rugged and dangerous places all over the world. The work is tough, not only because of the rough terrain

and weather conditions in the area they are called up on to work in, but also because they work in ancient battlegrounds where there are still unexploded bombs and ammunition.

So, what are the “when” questions I get? When does JPAC conduct its operations? The answer: Three major factors influence when we conduct our operations. First, the foreign countries where we want to operate in give us permission to enter and operate in their countries.

Two, when weather conditions are best to conduct our operations.

And three, when JPAC has sufficient funding and man power to conduct our operation.

Now, this funding factor will become more of a challenge as the DoD reduces its budget in the future.

But I am glad I was here yesterday and I am encouraged by the support of words spoken by President Obama here when he said we must do everything in our power to bring the MIAs home.

Here is the next category of questions I get, the “where” questions. Where does JPAC conduct its operations? The answer: We conduct our search and recovery operations worldwide, from Poland to Papua New Guinea, from China to Canada, from Vietnam to Vanuatu, just to name a few places.

Our identification operations, however, are conducted in our central identification laboratory in our headquarters in Hawaii.

The next question, where are the new places you wish to conduct operations? There are three places I wish to resume our operations. JPAC did conduct operations there before, but not currently. The three countries are: North Korea, Burma and India. We are looking for 600 World War II MIAs in Burma, over 350 World War II MIAs from India, and over 5,000 MIAs in North Korea.

I met with Burmese and India officials in 2012, and I am positive we will be able to return there to work in those countries this year. I am also hopeful to return to North Korea. We were supposed to and we were programmed, and we were scheduled to return to North Korea in April 2012, but as you might have read in the newspapers or on the news, the North Koreans decided to conduct a ballistic missile test in April, and our mission was unfortunately called off.

The final category that I am asked about is the “why” questions. Why is JPAC physically located in Hawaii and not in the Continental United States? The answer: All of the wars we are searching for MIAs occurred in the Pacific. The bulk of our work, 77 percent of our work, is in the Pacific. So, that’s why we are located in the middle of the Pacific so we can more efficiently reach the locations we need to work in.

A second “why” question, I get asked this question mostly by the foreign government officials I work with. Why does JPAC keep searching for our MIAs? Well, here is my answer. First and foremost, it is the right thing to do to bring comfort and closure to the families of the missing in action. Their loved ones are our country’s heroes who are sent abroad in harm’s way to defend our nation and never returned home. They deserve to come home to their families.

Second, JPAC is here to fulfill a solemn promise that each service member makes to a fellow service member, to never leave a fallen comrade behind. We, in the military, are obligated to bring all of our fallen brothers and sisters home.

So, that is the end of my top ten questions. I want to thank you for listening. I don't have time to give you a quiz about the information I gave you today, but I hope that you know more about JPAC now than when you woke up this morning.

Before I leave, I just want to thank the VFW for its unwavering and tireless support of JPAC, DPMO and the entire MIA personal accounting community. My personal thanks goes to the senior leadership, Commander-in-Chief DeNoyer, who has taken the time and trouble to visit JPAC teams on the ground in Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia, to gain a firsthand understanding of our work. We really appreciate you going the extra mile for us.

JPAC will continue to work hard until all our MIAs are recovered, identified and reunited with their families. Until they are home, God bless and thank you very much. (Applause)

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF DeNOYER: Thank you, General. I appreciate it. It is good having you here. Thank you for your good work.

GENERAL TOM: Thank you. (Applause)

INTRODUCTION OF CHARLES GILBERT KAPSNER - MINNESOTA STATE VETERANS CEMETERY MEMORIAL ASSOCIATION

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF DeNOYER: It is now my pleasure to introduce the internationally recognized artist Charles Gilbert Kapsner.

The Minnesota State Veterans Cemetery Memorial Association commissioned Charles to design and paint five canvases depicting the history of each of the five branches of the U.S. Armed Forces. The project is called "Looking to the Past, Present and Future: A Veteran's Educational Historic Project." It depicts the history of the five branches of service on oil canvases which will be hung in the cemetery's committal hall to represent all who served, commemorating their sacrifices in all wars, rather than eulogizing a particular war. More than a memorial to our Nation's fighting men and women, the paintings will serve as an educational tool to help future generations understand our Nation's history, and the vital role our military plays in maintaining our freedom and democracy.

The paintings will tell a story that focuses on individual trials and tribulations, offering the viewer a look into history and an understanding of what America's warriors go through in combat zones.

Charles' vision for this project is to pay tribute to the men and women of the armed services and their commitment to the protection of our democracy, something that is no doubt extremely important to him being the son of World War II veteran Gilbert Kapsner, who served in the Persian Gulf Command between 1942 and 1945.

Comrades and sisters, please welcome Charles Gilbert Kapsner. (Applause)

Charles, it is nice to have you. Thank you for coming.

REMARKS – CHARLES GILBERT KAPSNER – MINNESOTA STATE VETERANS CEMETERY MEMORIAL ASSOCIATION

MR. GILBERT KAPSNER: Good morning, everybody. I would like to recognize Commander-in-Chief Richard DeNoyer, Adjutant General Kent, Officers, veterans, guests, ladies and gentlemen. It is my privilege to be

here with you this morning to talk to you about the Veterans Historic Project, and it seems there has been a tremendous focus on education in this entire program, because I was able to be here yesterday and here again this morning.

The Minnesota State Veterans Cemetery, located in Minnesota, in Little Falls and Camp Ripley was opened in June 1994, originally established by the efforts of many individuals and veterans organizations. Today it is operated by the State of Minnesota. The cemetery, along with 85 other state veterans cemeteries across the country, are a complement to the National Cemetery Administration, NCA, providing veterans' burials in areas underserved by national cemeteries.

NCA provides support to state cemeteries in the forms of grants that can be used for development, expansion and/or improvement. During the last fiscal year ending in 2012, June 30, the cemetery provided 423 burials and is now the final resting place for over 4,500 veterans and their eligible family members.

Last July, the cemetery in Little Falls was recognized by NCA's Veterans Cemetery Grants Program for excellence in appearance. Only four of the 86 veterans cemeteries in operation have been honored with this award, and the State of Minnesota is very proud of this award.

The Veterans Historic Education Project is the brain child of a World War II veteran and former State Representative, Gordon Gerling, who envisioned a large-scale art project that would honor veterans and not any particular war. When completed, it will comprise five, eight-by-ten-foot paintings, each depicting the contributions of the men and women who have and are proudly serving in our nation's armed forces and preserving our freedom and democracy.

The five paintings ensure that each branch is showcased, the U.S. Army, the U.S. Marine Corps, the U.S. Navy, the U.S. Air Force, and the U.S. Coast Guard.

The State Veterans Cemetery located just outside of Camp Ripley, while the physical location is on the Mississippi River in Central Minnesota, it is a project that encompasses imageries, the stories, the faces and sacrifices of servicemen and women all across the nation, and it is in honor of them and of you. This first image provides you the sense of scale and feeling of the paintings.

As a painter, I am using the Renaissance approach of the allegory or storytelling, using it in an educational and artful manner that invites the viewer in.

The individual paintings tell the story of each branch, the origins, the fundamentals, historic impact and each will highlight significant events and activities. Many symbolic elements are interwoven providing detail and authenticity.

On this picture, the previous one is of me and my studio. Now, this image shows me with several of the models who pose in period uniforms, both historic and modern, modern not being depicted here. The use of live models ensures accurate portrayals with some of the veterans of World War II, Vietnam, et cetera. All of this is tied to the military, as a veteran or spouse, father, mother, son, daughter, uncle, aunt, friend, cousin.

So, while the images are of an actual person they serve as a pictorial metaphor for everyone's story.

I chose to paint the Army first as a tribute to my father who served in

the Persian Gulf Command during World War II. My research was made easier due to the proximity of the Military Museum located at Camp Ripley, located in my hometown's backyard, so to speak.

The information garnered at the museum, as well as from historians there and Fort Snelling as well as the actors allowed me to really replicate things as authentically as possible, using live models, again using drawings, sketches, paintings and photographic imagery.

I would like you to also take note of the Army paintings. I kind of serpentine through the history going back to 1775. As each piece is done, there is a very lengthy essay accompanying it so you will be able to read the different symbolic elements along with the story lines and time frames that are depicted in each. The Army painting was completed in October and installed just prior to Thanksgiving 2011, and as a way of educational promotion, archival prints have been made available image size roughly 20 by 25.

Additionally, promotional pieces, including a one-hour video documentary created by Minnesota Public Television, Lakeland's Public Television, will cover the remaining paintings as well.

As a sidebar, I would like to mention at the very end, the last image you will see will be addresses of three different websites. It will be my website. This will be my website, which will allow you to follow the progress of the project and read additional information. Lakeland's Public Television website, which will allow you to go on to a program called Common Ground in which they produced two half-hour videos on the beginning to the end of the Army painting.

I was just told the other day an easier approach to that is to go to You Tube Common Ground Episode 327-328, and finally the last slide will have the Initiative Foundation's website and address, if you are interested in helping move this project along.

I am now immersed in the Navy composition. With the help of my friend, Retired Admiral Henry McKinney, I was introduced to the curators and the research staff of both the Naval Memorial Foundation, the Navy History and Heritage Command in Washington, D.C.

As a sidebar, and I would also like to mention that two years ago Admiral McKinney was our featured speaker at the Sunday afternoon program, which is done each year at the cemetery grounds, with probably 1,500 people in attendance.

At that time, the Admiral stated in his six and a half to seven years as President and CEO of the Naval Memorial Foundation, during his travels around the country, that at no time had he seen a memorial for a cemetery being approached in such a manner. He also stated it would not only be a unique asset to not only Central Minnesota, Minnesota, but the country itself.

Now, this composition sketch, which you see up in the left-hand corner provides me the details to launch into full-scale painting. As you can see, once I move into its composition, there are many changes made. These are made possible by the use of live models.

In addition to that, you will notice that how the figures have changed to more like a swing in the anchor on the bottom, and with the Navy I am going to talk about the evolution of a branch of the service.

Next, we have the Coast Guard. The Coast Guard has a motto: "When called, we go out; we may not return, but we go out." The Coast Guard's

primary duty is to save lives, and they also guard our major waterways, the Great Lakes, the rivers and our coastline.

Next we have the U.S. Marine Corps. The Marine Corps will be showing a little bit of action, and there will be some extensive study done on this. As a matter of fact, this Friday I have been invited to go to Camp Ripley to witness a live firing of a new missile system, and some different type of artillery by the Commandant, Colonel St. Sauver. He has been a very big supporter of our project.

This will allow me to see firsthand some of the action that I will be depicting in this painting. Finally, we have the Air Force. I have saved the Air Force for the last, because I want to get back to always remembering this is a story line about the men and women who have served in the military and their contributions that have now been made, but are continuing to be made to our great nation.

The Air Force is involved in a lot of technologies, as I said, and so this will take a lot of study.

When this project began, it was inconceivable all of the things that would have happened as a result, some of which I would like to share, and at this moment the most importantly is the fact that I am here on this stage addressing you, a stage where yesterday we had a standing President of the United States.

You have had the time to honor many educators, so I feel like I am up here in an educational platform. This is a very wonderful, wonderful compliment to the VFW and the fact that you really push forth education to help our country understand your service, is really great.

Most notably in mind, Minnesota, the 2010-11 State Commander, Don Dallman, along with Joe Schirmers and Al Loehr took it on as a statewide project.

This detail is important since the project is not underwritten or funded by any one entity but rather is being funded 100 percent by contributions from both military and non-military donors. The unique feature of the project is that it is a pictorial tribute to the military. While most veterans' memorials are sculptural, architectural in nature, generally located out of doors, this one harkens back to really depictions of military life that viewers witnessed through the artists' images of a window by which the real events and real people from military life.

Through these paintings our goal is to put the Minnesota State Veterans Cemetery on the national stage. Its tranquil location on the Mississippi River, surrounded by lakes, prairies and woods, is the perfect backdrop for this unique memorial. The intent of the paintings is to bring the viewer inside to focus on the enduring impact of the servicemen and women, not only during their time of service but long after.

Whatever your branch of military, wherever in the world you were deployed, from the World War II to present day in Afghanistan, these paintings bring to life your contributions, your achievements, your sacrifices. They are your stories.

In closing, I would like to reflect on something. I am curious that in 113 years of this organization that if an artist of any discipline has had the privilege to stand before you and make some sort of presentation, because with all your service and sacrifice it would not be possible for me to do what we do and certainly this project in Minnesota would not be a reality.

So, if they have not thought of it, they should.

And on behalf of artists across America, I would like to thank you very much for your time, your service and sacrifice, and I am truly honored to be here this morning with you. I shall never forget this day as long as I live. Thank you very much. (Applause)

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF DeNOYER: Thank you, Charles.

REMARKS BY COMRADE JOE SCHIRMERS

COMRADE JOE SCHIRMERS (Post 4847 – Minnesota): I guess I get to finish it up. I am on the fund-raising end of it. I started the branch in the State of Minnesota to the Veterans of Foreign Wars to get it started. So, the names of all contributors of \$999 or less will be listed in a book that will be on display in the room next to the Commemorative Hall. An eight-by-ten granite wall will be in this room listing contributors, those at the level of \$1,000, \$5,000, \$10,000, \$20,000 and up on that level.

The name, branch of service and rank of a loved one can be listed if desired. Business organizations or individuals' names can also be listed. A special section will be listed for Posts as well as other veterans organizations will be listed. Charles has flyers if you are interested in making a donation.

My good friend over here that takes our notes for the Convention, he gave us a check. Thank God for him. Charles will be here until Thursday evening, so anybody that wants to make a contribution will see Charles. He has flyers for you.

Last but not least, I would like to mention what a great way to honor a family member and a veteran with this nice project. So, thank you very much. God bless each and every one of you and thank you, "Gunner" Kent and Commander-in-Chief, for allowing Charles to be here today to do this. Thank you. (Applause)

PRESENTATION OF DISTINGUISHED SERVICE MEDAL AND CITATION TO PAST QUARTERMASTER GENERAL LAWRENCE MAHER

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF DeNOYER: I am extremely proud to present our next guest — how does that classification of "guest" sound to you, Larry — with the Distinguished Service Medal and Citation in recognition of his lasting years of committed service to the VFW. Lawrence Maher is someone who has had an immensely positive impact on the Veterans of Foreign Wars for years and who undoubtedly deserves this award.

We take particular pride in the ability National Headquarters has to deliver assistance to VFW Posts and Departments wherever and whenever needed.

An integral part of the organization is its employees, the people who work at National Headquarters doing all that they can to provide dedicated support and assistance to our Departments and Posts.

Through the years, Larry has played an important role to ensure delivery of these services.

His many years of service to the VFW National Headquarters, initially as legal counsel, then as Assistant Quartermaster General in 1995, and finally as Quartermaster General in 2005, is testimony to his commitment and dedication to his community, his nation and to the organization.

Larry's exceptional service is one of great magnitude and importance,

and for that, we owe him many thanks and our gratitude.

This past spring he stepped down from the post of Quartermaster General, choosing instead to revel in what I am sure will be many wonderful years of retirement.

It is now my honor to introduce our friend, and award Larry Maher with the VFW Distinguished Service Medal and Citation. (Applause)

ADJUTANT GENERAL KENT: "Distinguished Service Medal and Citation awarded to Larry Maher in genuine appreciation and esteemed recognition of an honorable 17 years of exceptional and intrepid service to the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, initially fulfilling the position of Assistant Quartermaster General and then culminating his superlative career serving as Quartermaster General for six years.

"His unyielding commitment to the visions of the VFW, and the faithful dedication and superior expertise with which he performed his duties, have earned him the highest admiration and are in the finest traditions of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States.

"In Witness Whereof, we have hereunto set our hands and the official seal of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, this 24th day of July, 2012."

Signed by Richard L. DeNoyer, Commander-in-Chief, and Allen "Gunner" Kent, Adjutant General. (Applause)

REMARKS – PAST QUARTERMASTER GENERAL MAHER

PAST QUARTERMASTER GENERAL MAHER: First, I would really like to thank the Commander-in-Chief for having all the members of the press here today and the Ladies Auxiliary people back over here. This is just wonderful. I am confident that they are all here to hear my remarks.

I do promise not to speak very long, and I also promise not to speak about either the Pension Plan or the Life Member Plan this morning. I have passed those problems on to other people. (Applause) I knew that would get a round of applause. Thank you.

I passed those problems on to other people, and I am confident that they are in capable hands. You know, it has been a privilege working for the Veterans of Foreign Wars over the last 30-plus years, first as a young attorney, then as I said earlier, as a young Assistant Quartermaster General, and finally as the elected Quartermaster General.

I still remember being led into Julian Dickinson's office 30 years ago by a senior partner in my old law firm, and being introduced, quite frankly accurately at that time, as one of only a handful of Vietnam veteran lawyers practicing in Kansas City. I doubt that Mr. Dickinson anticipated the complexity and the variety of legal problems that would confront our organization over the last 30 years, and I am pretty darn sure he didn't expect me to end up as Quartermaster General in this organization. He was an impressive man, Mr. Dickinson.

I do want to thank my predecessor, Joe Ridgley, for the leap of faith he took 17 years ago when he brought me on to the staff as a full-time employee as the Assistant Quartermaster General. I also want to thank my successor, Bob Greene, for his hard work and wise counsel over the last 17 of his 34 years at National Headquarters. I want to thank "Gunner" and all the employees, both in Washington and Kansas City, for all of their assistance to me and the hard work they do every day for you.

The VFW truly is fortunate to have such a talented and dedicated group of employees, and I hope the membership appreciates that they are talented, dedicated and hard-working.

Finally, I want to thank my wife, Judy, who is here today along with my daughter, Molly. But I particularly want to thank my wife, because unfortunately her reward for my 17 years of service is that I will be hanging around the house more.

The last six or seven years have been financially challenging in our organization. The market crash and the recession have impacted both our balance sheet and the bottom line. We have had to take some occasionally unpopular steps, including staff reductions, budget cuts.

We have had to expand our search for revenue beyond the traditional areas and into some new and unfamiliar areas, and we have had to take those steps while still serving our members in carrying out our important programs. But because we were willing to make those difficult decisions, I think we have weathered that storm.

But I can assure you that there are other storms out there and that we will face some serious organizational and financial challenges ahead.

Now is the time to plan for those challenges. We need to take a long hard look at how we organize ourselves and how we do business, and we need to make changes if we find those changes are appropriate.

In closing, I would like to say two great things about working for the VFW. Those two great things are the mission that we have and the members that perform that mission. Because our mission is important, it is never hard to get up in the morning, and sometimes when things are dicey, it was hard to go to sleep at night. This organization does great things every day for veterans and their families, our military personnel and our country.

The language in Section 2 of our Congressional Charter is a little archaic, but it says everything that you need to know about what we do as an organization, we should be proud of what we do every day and, more importantly, we need to tell people about what we do every day. (Applause)

Finally, nobody can say enough about our members and what they do. I have had the pleasure of working with some great people, from Commanders-in-Chief right on down. You, the folks in this room and those folks back home in your Posts and Departments are the main reason that the VFW is successful. I am constantly, constantly amazed at the time and energy that you put into this organization as volunteers. I know you will keep it up.

God bless you and thank you very much. (Applause)

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF DeNOYER: Thanks, Larry. Congratulations. It is well-deserved.

...Convention Announcements...

INTRODUCTION OF THE HONORABLE MITT ROMNEY

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF DeNOYER: It is now my distinct pleasure to introduce my former Governor and now Republican nominee for this fall's presidential race, Mitt Romney.

Born in Detroit, young Mitt would spend 30 months in France as a Mormon missionary before returning to graduate in 1971 from the

esteemed Brigham Young University. In 1975, he would graduate in the top third of his Harvard Law School class, and in the top five percent of his Harvard Business School class.

He has also been a Sunday school teacher and, by the way, as some of you may have heard, a successful businessman, who then became President and CEO of the 2002 Winter Olympics Organizing Committee, then from 2003 to 2007, the Governor of the great Bay State of Massachusetts.

He was the first Massachusetts Governor to appoint a Secretary of Veterans Affairs to his cabinet, plus he championed the "Welcome Home Bill," that increased benefits for National Guardsmen by lowering life insurance premiums, provided them free tuition at state universities and colleges, increased their pay, and increased the death benefit paid to the families of Guardsmen who died in the line of duty.

From providing high-school diplomas to veterans who departed school to enlist in the military, to increasing property tax exemptions for disabled veterans and spouses of those killed after 9/11, Governor Romney has long been known as an advocate for our military and veterans' communities.

Comrades, sisters and distinguished guests, please welcome the Republican nominee to be the next President of the United States, Governor Mitt Romney.

(Whereupon, the assembly extended a prolonged standing ovation.)

REMARKS BY MITT ROMNEY – REPUBLICAN NOMINEE FOR PRESIDENT

MR. MITT ROMNEY: Thank you, Commander Richard DeNoyer. I appreciate the introduction, and I am proud to see a combat veteran from Massachusetts serving as National Commander-in-Chief of the VFW. A great job. Thank you, Commander. (Applause)

Ladies Auxiliary President, Gwen Rankin, incoming National Commander John Hamilton, incoming Ladies Auxiliary President Leanne Lemley, Adjutant General Allen "Gunner" Kent, Executive Director Bob Wallace, distinguished guests and members of the VFW: Thank you for your generous welcome.

I want to start today with a few words about the unimaginable tragedy in Colorado last week. We have since learned that among the victims were four people who had served, or were serving, our country in uniform. Today, our hearts go out to the families of John Larimer of the U.S. Navy; Rebecca Wingo, an Air Force veteran; Jesse Childress, an Army veteran and member of the Air Force Reserve; and Jonathan Blunk, a Navy veteran who died shielding his girlfriend from the spray of bullets. The loss of four Americans who served our country only adds to the profound tragedy of that day. All Americans are grateful for their service and deeply saddened by their deaths. We mourn them and we will remember them.

The VFW is now over two million strong. It has a special place in America's heart. Some of you fought recently in Iraq or Afghanistan. Others are old enough to have marched, flown or sailed by orders of Franklin D. Roosevelt. Whatever your age, whether you are a Republican or a Democrat, whenever you served, there is one thing you have in common: You answered the call of your country in a time of war.

From December 7th, 1941, to September 11, 2001, whenever America

has been tested, you stepped forward. You come from our farms, our great cities, our small towns and quiet neighborhoods. Many of you have known violence so that your neighbors could only know peace. You have done more than protect America, your courage and service defines America. You are America at our best and it is an honor to address you. (Applause)

Our veterans are a part of a proud tradition that stretches back to the battlefields at Lexington and Concord, and now to places like Fallujah and Kandahar. Year after year, our men and women in uniform have added proud achievements to their record of service. And President Obama appropriately pointed to some of them yesterday in his speech.

Any time our military accomplishes a vital mission it is a proud moment for our nation. But we owe our veterans and our military more than just an accounting of our successes. They deserve a fair and frank assessment of the whole picture, of where we are and where we want to be. And when it comes to national security and foreign policy, as with our economy, the last few years have been a time of declining influence and missed opportunity.

Just consider some of the challenges I discussed with you at your last National Convention:

Since then, has the American economy recovered?

Has our ability to shape world events been enhanced, or diminished?

Have we gained greater confidence among our allies, and greater respect from our adversaries?

And, perhaps most importantly, has the most severe security threat facing America and our friends, a nuclear-armed Iran become more or less likely?

These clear measures are the ultimate tests of American leadership. And, by these standards, we haven't seen much in the President's first term that inspires confidence in a second.

The President's policies have made it harder to recover from the deepest recession in 70 years, exposed the military to cuts that no one can justify, compromised our national-security secrets, and in dealing with other nations, given trust where it is not earned, insult where it is not deserved, and apology where it is not due. (Applause)

From Berlin to Cairo to the United Nations, President Obama has shared his view of America and its place among nations. I have come here today to share mine.

I am an unapologetic believer in the greatness of America, I am not ashamed of American power. I take pride that throughout history our power has brought justice where there was tyranny, peace where there was conflict, and hope where there was affliction and despair. I do not view America as just one more point on the strategic map, one more power to be balanced. I believe our country is the greatest source for good the world has ever known, and that our influence is needed as much now as ever before. (Applause) And I am guided by one overwhelming conviction and passion. This century must be an American century.

In 1941, Henry Luce called on his countrymen, just then realizing their strength, to "create the first great American century." And they succeeded together with their allies, they won World War II, they rescued Europe, they defeated Communism, and America took its place as leader of the free world. Across the globe, they fought, they bled, they led. They showed the world the extraordinary courage of the American heart and the generosity of the American spirit.

That courage and generosity remains unchanged today. But sadly, this President has diminished American leadership and we are reaping the consequences. The world is dangerous, destructive, chaotic. And the two men running to be your commander-in-chief must offer their answers to the challenges we face.

Like a watchman in the night, we must remain at our post and keep guard of the freedom that defines and ennobles us, and our friends. In an American century, we have the strongest economy and the strongest military in the world. In an American century, we secure peace through our strength. And if by absolute necessity we must employ it, we must wield our strength with resolve. In an American century, we lead the free world and the free world leads the entire world.

If we do not have the strength or vision to lead, then other powers will take our place, pulling history in a very different direction. A just and peaceful world depends on a strong and confident America. I pledge to you that if I become commander-in-chief, the United States of America will fulfill its duty, and its destiny. (Applause)

American leadership depends, as it always has, on our economic strength, on our military strength, and on our moral strength. If any one of those falters, no skill of diplomacy or presidential oratory can compensate. Today, as you know, the strength of our economy is in jeopardy.

A healthy American economy is what underwrites American power. When growth is missing, government revenue falls, social spending rises, and many in Washington look to cut defense spending as an easy out. That includes our current President.

Today we are just months away from an arbitrary, across-the-board budget reduction that would saddle the military with a trillion dollars in cuts, severely shrink our force structure, and impair our ability to meet and deter threats. Don't bother trying to find a serious military rationale behind any of this, unless that rationale is wishful thinking. Strategy is not driving President Obama's massive defense cuts. In fact, his own Secretary of Defense warned that these reductions would be "devastating." And he is right.

The devastation starts at home. Mark my words, these cuts would only weaken an already stretched VA system and impair our solemn commitment that every veteran receives care second to none. If I am President of the United States, I will not let that happen.

This is not the time for the President's radical cuts in the military. Look around the world. Other major powers are rapidly adding to their military capabilities, some with intentions very different from ours. The regime in Tehran is drawing closer to developing a nuclear weapon. The threat of radical Islamic terrorism persists. The threat of weapons of mass destruction proliferation is ever present. And we are still at war and still have uniformed men and women in conflict.

All this and more is ongoing in the world. And yet the President has chosen this moment for wholesale reductions in the nation's military capacity. When the biggest announcement in his last State of the Union Address on improving our military was that the Pentagon will start using more clean energy, then you know it's time for a change. (Applause)

We are not the first people to observe this. It is reported that Bob Gates, the President's first Secretary of Defense, bluntly addressed another security problem within this administration. After secret operational details of the

bin Laden raid were given to reporters, Secretary Gates walked into the West Wing and told the Obama team to “shut up.” He added a colorful word for emphasis.

Lives of American servicemen and women are at stake. But astonishingly, the administration failed to change its ways. More top-secret operations were leaked, even some involving covert action in Iran.

This isn't a partisan issue, it's a national security crisis. And just yesterday, Democrat Senator Dianne Feinstein, Chairman of the Senate Intelligence Committee, said, “I think the White House has to understand that some of this is coming from their ranks.”

This conduct is contemptible. It betrays our national interest. It compromises our men and women in the field. And it demands a full and prompt investigation by a special counsel with explanation and consequence. Obama appointees, who are accountable to President Obama's Attorney General, should not be responsible for investigating the leaks coming from the Obama White House.

Whoever provided classified information to the media, seeking political advantage for the administration, must be exposed, dismissed, and punished. The time for stonewalling is over. (Applause)

It is not enough to say the matter is being looked into, and just leave it at that. When the issue is the political use of highly-sensitive national security information, it is unacceptable to say, “We'll report our findings after Election Day.”

Exactly who in the White House betrayed these secrets? Did a superior authorize it? These are things that Americans are entitled to know, and they are entitled to know right now. If the President believes, as he said last week, that the buck stops with him, then he owes all Americans a full and prompt accounting of the facts. (Applause)

And let me make this very clear. These events made the decision we face in November all the more important. What kind of White House would reveal classified material for political gain? I'll tell you right now: mine won't. (Applause)

The harm done when national security secrets are betrayed extends, of course, to the trust that allies place in the United States.

The operating principle of American foreign policy has been to work with our allies so that we can deter aggression before it breaks out into open conflict. That policy depends on nurturing our alliance and standing up for our common values. Yet the President has moved in the opposite direction.

It began with the sudden abandonment of our friends in Poland and the Czech Republic. They had courageously agreed to provide sites for our anti-missile systems, only to be told, at the last hour, that the agreement was off. As part of the so-called reset in policy, missile defenses were sacrificed as a unilateral concession to the Russian government.

If that gesture was designed to inspire good will with Russia, it clearly missed the mark. The Russian government defended the dictator in Damascus, arming him as he slaughtered the Syrian people.

We can only guess what Vladimir Putin makes of the Obama administration. He regained the Russian presidency in a corrupt election, and for that, he got a congratulatory call from the Oval Office. And then there was that exchange picked up by a microphone that President Obama didn't know was on. We heard him asking Dmitry Medvedev to tell Mr.

Putin to give him “space.” “This is my last election,” President Obama said, and “after my election, I’ll have more flexibility.”

Why is flexibility with Russian leaders more important than transparency to the American people? (Applause)

President Obama has a moment of candor, however, just the other day. He said that the actions of the Venezuelan Dictator Hugo Chavez have not had a serious national security impact on us. In my view, inviting Hezbollah into our hemisphere is severe; it is serious and a threat, and I will recognize it as such. (Applause)

But at least he was consistent. After all, this is the President who faltered when the Iranian people were looking for support in their struggle against the Ayatollahs. That public uprising was treated as an inconvenient problem for the President’s policy of engagement, instead of a moral and strategic opportunity. The terrible misjudgment should never be repeated. When unarmed women and men in Tehran find the courage to confront their oppressors, at risk to torture and death, they should hear the unequivocal voice of an American President affirming their rights to be free.

I will leave Reno this evening on a trip abroad that will take me to England, Poland, and Israel. And since I wouldn’t venture into another country to question American foreign policy, I will tell you right here, before I leave, what I think of this administration’s shabby treatment of one of our finest friends.

President Obama is fond of lecturing Israel’s leaders. He was even caught by a microphone deriding them. He has undermined their position, which was tough enough as it was. And even at the United Nations, to the enthusiastic applause of Israel’s enemies, he spoke as if our closest ally in the Middle East was the problem.

The people of Israel deserve better than what they have received from the leader of the free world. And the chorus of accusations, threats and insults at the United Nations should never again include the voice of the President of the United States. (Applause)

There are values, causes and nations that depend on American strength, on the clarity of our purpose, and on the reliability of our commitments. There is work in this world that only America and our allies can do, hostile powers that only we can deter, and challenges that only we can overcome.

For the past decade, among those challenges has been the war in Afghanistan. As commander-in-chief, I will have a solemn duty to our men and women in uniform. A President owes our troops, their families, and the American people a clear explanation of our mission and a commitment not to play politics with the decisions of war.

I have been critical of the President’s decision to withdraw the surge troops during the fighting season, against the advice of the commanders on the ground. President Obama would have you believe that anyone who disagrees with his decisions is arguing for endless war. But the route to more war, and to potential attacks here at home, is politically timed retreat.

As President, my goal in Afghanistan will be to complete a successful transition to Afghan security forces by the end of 2014. I will evaluate conditions on the ground and solicit the best advice of our military commanders. And I will affirm that my duty is not to my political prospects, but to the security of the nation and the safety of our troops. (Applause)

We face another continuing challenge in a rising China. China is attentive to the interests of its government, but it too often disregards the rights of its people. It is selective in the freedoms it allows; and, as with its one-child policy, it can be ruthless in crushing the freedom it denies. In conducting trade with America, it permits flagrant patent and copyright violations, forestalls American businesses from competing in its market and manipulates its currency to obtain unfair advantage. It is in our mutual interest for China to be a partner for a stable and secure world, and we welcome its participation in trade. But the cheating must finally be brought to a stop. President Obama hasn't done it and won't do it, and I will. (Applause)

We will need that same clarity of purpose and resolve in the Middle East. America cannot be neutral in the outcome there. We must clearly stand for the values of representative government, economic opportunity, and human rights. And we must stand against the extension of Iranian or Jihadist influence.

Egypt is at the center of this historical drama. In many ways, it has the power to tip the balance in the Arab world toward freedom and modernity. As President, I will not only direct the billions in assistance we give to Egypt toward that goal, but I will also work with partner nations to place conditions on their assistance as well. Unifying our collective influence behind a common purpose will foster the development of a government that represents all Egyptians, maintains peace with Israel and promotes peace throughout the region. The United States is willing to help Egypt support peace and prosperity, but we will not be complicit in oppression and instability.

There is no greater danger in the world today than the prospect of the ayatollahs in Tehran possessing nuclear weapons capability. Yet for all the talks and conferences, all of the extensions and assurances, can anyone really say we are farther from this danger now than four years ago?

The same ayatollahs who each year mark a holiday by leading chants of "death to America" are not going to be talked out of their pursuit of nuclear weapons. What is needed is all the firmness, clarity and moral courage that we and our allies can gather. Sanctions must be enforced without exception, cutting off the regime's sources of wealth. Negotiations must secure full and unhindered access for inspections.

As it is, the Iranian regime claims the right to enrich nuclear material for supposedly peaceful purposes. This claim is discredited by years of deception. A clear line must be drawn. There must a full suspension of any enrichment, period. (Applause)

And at every turn, Iran must know that the United States and our allies stand as one in these critical objectives. Only in this way can we successfully counter the catastrophic threat that Iran presents. I pledge to you and to all Americans that if I become commander-in-chief, I will use every means necessary to protect ourselves in the region, and to prevent the worst from happening while there is still time.

It is a mistake, and sometimes a tragic one, to think that firmness in American foreign policy can bring only tension or conflict. The surest path to danger is always weakness and indecision. (Applause) In the end, it is resolve that moves events in our direction, and strength that keeps the peace.

I will not surrender America's leadership in the world. We must have

confidence in our cause, clarity in our purposes, and resolve in our might.

This is very simple: If you do not want America to be the strongest nation on earth, I am not your President. But with his cuts to the military, you have that President today.

This 21st century can and must be an American century. It began with terror, war and economic calamity. It is our duty to steer it onto the path of freedom, peace and prosperity.

Fewer members of the Greatest Generation are with us here today, and they can't hold the torch as high as they have in the past. They are getting older. It is now our turn. We must now seize the torch they carried so gallantly and at such sacrifice. It is an eternal torch of decency, freedom and hope. It is not America's torch alone. But it is America's duty and honor to hold it high enough so that all the world can see its light.

I love America; I love what America represents. I love the sacrifice that America has made for freedom throughout the world. This is a critical time for our nation, a time of choice, a time to determine what America is going to be over this century. You know where I will lead us and we will have another century with freedom blossoming and prosperity for all of our citizens, because I believe in America, I believe in you. I salute you and together we will make sure we keep America the hope of the earth. Thank you so very much and God bless the VFW and the United States of America.

(Whereupon, the assembly extended a prolonged standing ovation.)

CLOSING CEREMONIES

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF DeNOYER: Sergeant-at-Arms, you will please perform the closing ceremonies for today's business session.

SERGEANT-AT-ARMS O'BRIEN: Yes, sir, Commander-in-Chief. Comrades, please rise.

National Chaplain.

BENEDICTION

NATIONAL CHAPLAIN HOLLAND: Our Heavenly Father, dismiss us in your love. May the friendships here formed and continued, receive Thy blessings.

May we continue, with your guidance, to work for the good of they who protect us. May the comfort of your presence bless and protect our servicemen and women, and give them, and their families, the strength that they need every day.

Forgive us our failures and guide us each hour as we live. May you continue to look upon America with benevolence and grace.

We ask these things in your holy name. Amen.

SERGEANT-AT-ARMS O'BRIEN: Comrades, facing the flag of the United States, please join me in the salute.

Comrade Commander-in-Chief, the closing ceremonies have been completed.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF DeNOYER: Thank you, comrades. We will now stand in recess until 8:00 o'clock a.m. tomorrow morning. Thank you.

(Whereupon, the meeting was recessed at 11:50 o'clock a.m., to reconvene on Wednesday, July 25, 2012, at 8:00 o'clock a.m.)

THIRD BUSINESS SESSION
WEDNESDAY, JULY 25, 2012

(The Third Business Session of the 113th National Convention of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, meeting in the Reno/Sparks Convention Center, Reno, Nevada, was 8:00 o'clock a.m., by Commander-in-Chief Richard L. DeNoyer.)

CALL TO ORDER

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF DeNOYER: Good morning. I will now reconvene the 113th VFW National Convention.

Sergeant-at-Arms, you will, please, conduct the Opening Ceremonies.

SERGEANT-AT-ARMS O'BRIEN: Yes, sir, Commander-in-Chief.

Comrades, please rise for the Opening Prayer, followed by the Pledge of Allegiance to the flag of the United States of America.

Comrade National Chaplain.

OPENING PRAYER

NATIONAL CHAPLAIN HOLLAND: To you, therefore, most merciful God, we make humble prayer and petition that you accept the work that we do in your name and that of America's veterans.

Remember, Lord, those who now defend us. Keep them safe until such time as they return to a nation that is grateful, and worthy of their noble efforts. Help them, and their families, to become one with us, as we continue our efforts to make their, and indeed our, lives better.

Be pleased, O, God, with our daily lives, as we strive to improve and to obey your word with our thoughts and deeds.

May we know your will, so as to be better at the most difficult work at hand. May you continue to rain down blessings upon America, your most perfect gift. These things we ask in your holy name. Amen.

SALUTE TO COLORS AND PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

(Whereupon, Sergeant-at-Arms O'Brien led the assembly in the Pledge of Allegiance, followed by the Salute to the Colors.)

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF DeNOYER: Thank you, Sergeant-at-Arms.

I would like to now call on Betty Gripp for the final report of the Credentials Committee.

FINAL REPORT OF CONVENTION CREDENTIALS COMMITTEE

COMRADE BETTY GRIPP (Department of Arizona): Commander-in-Chief, Council members, delegates:

At the close of business 4:00 p.m. yesterday, July 24th, 2012, the total delegates registering their credentials are as follows:

Total Delegates, 14,692. Total Department Commanders, 51. Total Past Commanders-in-Chief, 24. Total National Officers, 36.

That is for a grand total of 14,803.

Commander-in-Chief, this is my final report.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF DeNOYER: Thank you, Betty. I appreciate it.

A good job done.

INTRODUCTION OF THE NATIONAL SERGEANTS-AT-ARMS

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF DeNOYER: Comrades, standing behind me are the elite, our VFW National Sergeants-at-Arms. I want to express my appreciation to this group of comrades we see annually at our National Convention and our Washington Conference. They are the first ones in the hall, and among the last to leave. They work long hours in order to ensure the success of our national meetings.

These folks are strictly volunteers, so obviously, this is mostly a labor of love for them. I am sure that everyone recognizes what an outstanding job they do for the VFW.

It is my privilege to introduce the National Sergeant-at-Arms and Life Member of Post 2394, in Melrose, Massachusetts, Bryan P. O'Brien. (Applause)

Bryan has been a member of the Sergeants-at-Arms for 13 years. He is a Past All State Post Commander, Past District Commander and Past County Council Commander. In 1982, Bryan was named the VFW's National Young Veteran of the Year. He is a member of the Massachusetts Policemen's Association and has worked for the Massachusetts Department of Transportation for 28 years as a senior controller and supervisor in Boston. Bryan is simply an outstanding leader with an ultimate character and integrity.

Gary Barringer has been a Sergeant for 18 years. He is a Life Member of the VFW, Military Order of the Cootie, DAV, AmVets, and the National Guard Association. He is also a member of the American Legion and the VVA. He is retired from the North Carolina National Guard after 34 years of service. Gary is also retired from Norfolk Southern Railroad after 22 years. Gary is a VAVS representative for the Department of North Carolina at the W.G. "Bill Hefner" VA Medical Center in Salisbury, North Carolina. Gary is a Past Department Commander of North Carolina, and he is the State Sergeant-at-Arms. He has been the Quartermaster of Post 9134 in Rockwell, North Carolina, for over 30 years. Gary is a member of the Rockwell Rural Fire Department where he is also a medical responder. (Applause)

Joy Ausman has been a member of the Sergeants-at-Arms for 16 years and is a Life Member of Lewiston, Idaho, Post 10043 and Cloquet, Minnesota, VFW Auxiliary to Post 3979. She is a Past District Commander and Quartermaster, and Past Post Commander. She is employed by Clearwater Pulp and Paper as the Health, Safety and Security Manager. (Applause)

Joe Schirmers is our resident golden boy because he has been a Sergeant for 51 years -- that's right, 51 years -- and that deserves a separate applause. (Applause)

Joe is a Life Member of Post 4847 in Saint Cloud, Minnesota. His volunteer work spans decades: Minnesota State Surgeon General for 19 years, State Chaplain for 13 years, Big Ten Sergeant-at-Arms for 50 years, and District 6 Officer-of-the-Day for 50 years. He retired from Burlington Northern Railroad with 35 years of service. As a result of more than 48,500 hours of volunteer service at VA Hospitals, he has received the VFW National Hospital Award, Volunteer of the Year Award and the Cootie

Supreme Award. (Applause)

Lonnie Garza has been a Sergeant for seven years and is a Life Member of Post 3413, San Marcos, Texas. He earned All American Post Commander honors four times and the National Recruiter Century Award 16 times. Lonnie retired from the Army in 1987 with 22 years of service as an infantryman. He presently works for the National Guard's "A" Company of the 636 Military Intelligence Detachment in New Braunfels. (Applause)

Keith MacDonald has been a Sergeant for 18 years and is a Life Member of Post 2275 in El Cajon, California. He is retired from the U.S. Navy after 23 and a half years as a Senior Chief Petty Officer. Keith is currently employed by Intellisolutions, Incorporated, as a Department of Defense contractor at the Space and Naval Warfare Center. Keith is a past All American Post and All American District Commander. (Applause)

George Lott has been a Sergeant for over two years and is a Life Member and Past Commander of Lieutenant Robert A. Madden Post 10152, Ogdensburg, New Jersey, and a Past District 21 Commander. George is a former United States Army Drill Sergeant. He serves as the Department of New Jersey Sergeant-at-Arms and has held that position for the last 22 years. George was employed as a police officer in Ogdensburg for 34 years and retired in 2008 as the Chief of Police. (Applause)

These are the comrades we depend on so much. Sometimes, we forget to express our gratitude, so at this time I want to publicly say "thank you" to each and every one of you. All of you do a superlative job for all of us.

I am proud of the professional way in which you always conduct yourselves and I am honored to have the opportunity to serve with you. On behalf of the entire organization, thank you again for your service.

(Whereupon, the assembly extended a prolonged standing ovation.)

INTRODUCTION OF LADIES AUXILIARY NATIONAL PRESIDENT GWEN RANKIN

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF DeNOYER: Now, I am extremely pleased that here to visit our Convention today is a woman whom I was proud to serve with during the past year.

Gwen Rankin has worked tirelessly on behalf of the Ladies Auxiliary for many years and has left a tremendous legacy for others to follow for years to come. I admire her deeply. She is a true compatriot and an outstanding leader. Please welcome a wonderful lady from Santa Clara, California, Glen Rankin, National President of the Ladies Auxiliary. (Applause)

GREETINGS – LADIES AUXILIARY NATIONAL PRESIDENT RANKIN

LADIES AUXILIARY PRESIDENT RANKIN: Good morning. To Commander-in-Chief DeNoyer, to our Past Commanders-in-Chief, our National Officers, all VFW members and all guests:

It is such a privilege for me to be with you this morning and have this wonderful opportunity to greet you one more time as the National President of the Ladies Auxiliary to the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States of America.

My great thanks go to each and every one of you, especially to all of my cousins out there. You are out there, right? That is all of the Department Commanders that served under Richard DeNoyer. You all have helped me

make this year so amazing, not only to me but for each member of the Ladies Auxiliary to the Veterans of Foreign Wars.

Like you, Chief, I have witnessed our incredible membership up close all year, every morning watching those numbers grow. You, as members, officers at all levels, and the wonderful staff at your National Headquarters headed up by Adjutant General "Gunner" Kent with their counterparts have done such amazing things.

That is everything from helping veterans with VA claims to being proactive in the Legislative Programs, to being visible in hospitals and at funerals, and all the outstanding projects you worked at that is fulfilling and rewarding to all that you have affected, including awarding student scholarships.

You all have stepped up to ensure that no veteran, nor his family, was left behind. I am so extremely proud and excited to be a part of the Veterans of Foreign Wars family.

You, as VFW members, and we, as Ladies Auxiliary members, have seen to it that together we have made a difference in the lives of our veterans and their families.

Though my term is nearly at an end, I have never been more committed to our missions than I am today. And why is that? It is because I know that our work is not complete, nor will it be completed until every single veteran is taken care of based on the standards that suit the heroes of our country.

None of us will nor should we rest until we have done everything we can to make sure they are honored, respected, listened to, and helped to the fullest extent. That's why we belong, that's why I belong, that's why we send millions of dollars collectively, and we give millions of hours of our time. This is why, because someone has to do this, and we are the right ones for the job. Let's not forget, after all, no one does more for veterans than every single one of you.

The VFW, working side-by-side, you have in us the unwavering support for uncommon heroes. If I have not told you in my travels, you are truly America's heroes. You are enabling for the cause that we honor the dead by helping the living.

I just want to say that in my travels and reading the reports of my Department Presidents, some of them made me cry, because I had to read of such struggles that Auxiliaries encounter with the Posts.

If we are to be viewed as something wonderful to join, we need to be unified.

All of you during your time of service gave so freely. You said that you would put your life on the line, and you covered up your buddy to make sure he was safe, and was willing to take that bullet. Do that in your meetings, protect our Auxiliaries. We all need to survive as an organization.

Richard, congratulations on a job so well done, and to every veteran in this room as well, thank you for your service to our country, thank you for my freedom and the liberties that I have.

And as I have mentioned in every one of the 51 Departments I visited, some of you we visibly see your injuries, many we do not. But I want you to know that my prayer is always that your God will help you to heal that what goes in your minds and your hearts, that you know that your mother's arms are always around you, and that your God will heal you.

I wish that God bless you. I know that he blesses the United States of America, and that he is keeping our troops close at hand. Thank you so very much for this opportunity, Chief, and I wish you a most successful convention.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF DeNOYER: Thank you, Gwen. (Applause)

LADIES AUXILIARY PRESIDENT RANKIN: Part of my coming over, I have the pleasure of introducing Theresa DeNoyer. She is no stranger to all of you, because I have seen how she approaches so many of you, and how many of you are so kind in your words to Theresa. It is well-deserved, because she is that generous type of a person and that caring.

Theresa, would you like to say a few words?

MRS. RICHARD DeNOYER: I would just like to say thank you. Richard and I have had a wonderful three years. We look forward to seeing many of you again in our travels. And again thank you.

It has been a pleasure to meet all of you, to get to really know some of you, and it has been a real pleasure working with Gwen. I appreciate it. Thank you very much. (Applause)

LADIES AUXILIARY PRESIDENT RANKIN: With me is my Chief of Staff and our extension, Sherl Ann Daverio.

If I might take a moment of privilege, when I came in, I saw two wonderful people here from Burger King. I just want to say good morning, and what a friend you have in these two.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF DeNOYER: Now, Gwen, before you leave, we have just a little token of our appreciation which we would like to give to you.

MRS. RICHARD DeNOYER: You don't have to open it now.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF DeNOYER: But you can if you like.

MRS. RICHARD DeNOYER: No, no.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF DeNOYER: She has the option, I guess is what I have to say. It is just an expression of our thanks for your kindnesses and your courtesies of both you and Rick. We sincerely appreciate it.

We will be back to California and will be in your company again. Thank you and God bless you and your husband. Thank you very much. (Applause)

LADIES AUXILIARY PRESIDENT RANKIN: California, I am coming home.

INTRODUCTION OF MIKE DeROSA, BURGER KING FRANCHISEE ASSOCIATION

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF DeNOYER: Our next guest is a great friend to the VFW and an avid supporter to our military. In 2007, while serving as President of Burger King Restaurants Mid-America Franchisee Association, Mike DeRosa and his beautiful wife, Sherry, developed and have been the driving force behind an incredibly successful fund-raising program for the VFW Foundation.

Their enthusiasm in supporting our nation's heroes has led them to rally the support of hundreds of respective managers and enthusiastic employees in their quest to help VFW provide vital financial assistance to service members and military families in need.

To date, the Burger King superlative teams have raised more than \$1.7 million for VFW's Unmet Needs Program. That is a truly astounding

number! (Applause)

Our heartfelt thanks goes out to everyone who has played a part in this wonderful and magnanimous endeavor.

Here to give us an update on how Burger King franchisees are continuing their effort to support the Unmet Needs Program, please welcome back Burger King franchisee owner and member of the VFW Foundation Board of Directors, and I may add our own most favorite burger-flipper, Mr. Mike DeRosa. (Applause)

REMARKS – MR. MIKE DeROSA, BURGER KING

MR. DeROSA: Good morning, and thank you, Commander. Sherry and I very much appreciate the hospitality that is always extended to us by the VFW. Your new motto, “The VFW, No One Does More for Veterans,” well, you heard we have raised over \$1.7 million, and I am going to tell you when I come back, if we are invited back next year, I hope to say we have cracked \$2 million.

I want to tell you a very quick story about how the VFW, and maybe it is something that the gentleman I am going to talk about didn’t even realize at the time, but it is how we all help each other.

About a year ago, I got a telephone call from a gentleman who was the President of the Eau Claire, Wisconsin, Exchange Club, and they were putting on a program called “The Field of Honor.” It is going to be held this September, over September 11th. They are going to display a huge field of American flags. There will be Wisconsin flags, one for every member of the military who died in the service of their country in current Middle East wars.

He called me and he told me about this, and he said, “You know, what we do is we have companies sponsor the flags so we can raise money.” I get a lot of calls like that. I said, “Okay. Fine.” I thought maybe he wanted me to sponsor a flag. I said, “We would love to help.” He said, “Well, actually, we are going to raise maybe \$20,000, \$30,000, \$40,000, and we would like to give it to the Unmet Needs through you.” (Applause)

It occurred to me simply because my wife suggested it to me that this — I am a little like Commander DeNoyer over here and his wife. Anyway, what it had was really simply this: Yes, Burger King could do a lot, you guys are Burger King customers, and you help us do that. You help all of the sponsors that you will see today that are coming back to help the VFW. But what really happens is because the gentleman who was the president of the Exchange Club was also a veteran and also a member of the VFW, he saw a way to take an activity that was not necessarily veteran specific, and folded it into a program that could help veterans, the Unmet Needs Program.

So, Sherry and I wanted to leave you with that idea, that every one of you out there is a potential resource to help the VFW in partnership, whether it is with Burger King or some other people that are going to follow me.

This is an opportunity for us to really live up to that motto, “The VFW, No One Does More for Veterans.” Thank you. (Applause)

PRESENTATION OF CHECK BY SPORT CLIPS

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF DeNOYER: Please dim the lights for a special

video presentation from our friends at Sport Clips.

(Whereupon, the video was played at this time.)

The VFW has been very fortunate to have formed a strong relationship with a great American company over the years in Sport Clips. Sport Clips founder, CEO and VFW Post 8587 Life Member Gordon Logan had a strong desire to support Operation Uplink due to his memories of wanting to call home during his time spent overseas. So, in 2007, Sport Clips kicked off its first Operation Uplink fund-raiser by donating \$1 from each haircut directly to the VFW Operation Uplink program.

Mr. Logan and his wonderful Sport Clips team have continued their efforts each Veterans Day for the past five years with ever-growing success. This year Sport Clips is sponsoring an impressive 17 free call days for our troops in combat zones! (Applause)

Today, we are truly honored to have Margaret Allee and Dana Dussing-Berry, joined by Navy veteran Jim Walsh and his wife, Lorraine, here with us today representing Sport Clips. Please give them a tremendous welcome. (Applause)

REMARKS – MS. MARGARET ALLEE, SPORT CLIPS

MS. ALLEE: Good morning. I am so honored to be in this room and in the presence of so many heroes this morning. On behalf of Sport Clips Haircuts, I want to say how grateful we are for your service to our country, and consider it a privilege to support the VFW's Operation Uplink Program through helping you.

Dana and I both have family members who served in the military, and it is important to us personally to support the important works that Sport Clips is doing to honor those who protect our freedom.

In 2007, Sport Clips began with a goal of helping deployed and hospitalized U.S. service members to call home at no cost through raising \$80,000 for Operation Uplink. Since then, through the support of our stores and clients, we have raised a total of more than \$1.3 million, and today more than 1.8 million calls have been made possible through the "Help A Hero Program."

This year we took our commitment a step further by sponsoring the VFW Sport Clips "Help A Hero" 200 at Darlington Raceway.

On our three sponsored days, on the 4th of July, more than 29,000 calls were made, and we look forward to providing more calls in a few weeks on August 11th.

As a company, Sport Clips' mission is to support and honor U.S. service members through "Help A Hero" truly stops at the top with our CEO and founder, Gordon Logan, who is also a Lifetime Member of the VFW and a VFW Foundation Board member.

Gordon served as an Aircraft Commander in the Air Force and understands firsthand the importance of hearing a loved one's voice while serving. Under Gordon's leadership with the VFW partnership, and through the enthusiastic support of Sport Clips franchisees and team members across the country, we look forward to this year's fund-raiser and to fund the "Help A Hero" program in the years to come.

We, at Sport Clips thank you again for your service to our great nation. I would now like to introduce Sport Clips franchisee, Jim Walsh. (Applause)

REMARKS – MR. JIM WALSH, SPORT CLIPS FRANCHISEE

MR. WALSH: It is really an honor and a privilege to be in this room. Being a part of a company that supports the military means a great deal to me. I served in the Navy on the USS Coral Sea in 1976 to 1980.

My dad was a fighter pilot in World War II. My daughter and son-in-law are currently Staff Sergeants in the U.S. Marine Corps. My son, John, currently is a Tech Sergeant, U.S. Air Force Reserves. My father-in-law is Retired Air Force. So, I am pretty well surrounded by military and the history of the military.

I have a civilian job now, and along with my wife, Lorraine, we run a couple of Sport Clips stores in Northern California. Through these stores and the great team members who work with us there, we are able to take our personal support of the military even further by joining the franchisees' "Help A Hero" program.

It was important for me to call home when I served, it is important for me now to hear the voices of my kids. I know it is important to those brave men and women who are deployed or hospitalized to connect with their loved ones. That's why our stores, near military bases in Uba City and Vacaville, Travis Air Force Base, have bake sales and yard sales and hand out Halloween stickers. The team comes up with all kinds of great ideas for raising money. They really get pumped up about what they can do to raise money for Operation Uplink.

On top of the extra dollar for a haircut service, Sport Clips gives to everyone who gets a haircut on Veterans Day to support the VFW Operation Uplink.

While my stores do fund-raising events, again this fall there will be Sport Clips across 41 states doing the same. Each year it is growing in numbers, so that we can continue to help our "Help A Hero" program and help further the important work of Operation Uplink.

Just as your slogan says, "No One Does More for Veterans than the VFW," no one does more for Operation Uplink than Sport Clips. (Applause)

WINNERS OF THE NATIONAL BUDDY POPPY CONTEST

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF DeNOYER: Now to announce the 2012 National Buddy Poppy Contest winners is Steve Van Buskirk, Director of Programs.

COMRADE VAN BUSKIRK: The Buddy Poppy is, without question, one of the most recognizable symbols around the world. To VFW members, it symbolizes the commemoration of our war dead and our service to living veterans. For decades, VFW members have distributed the beloved Buddy Poppy to millions of Americans each year.

Today, we are taking a few moments to honor those who have taken the Buddy Poppy to the next level. These are individuals and Posts who have used our Buddy Poppies in the creation of inspirational and exceptional works of art and display.

The entries were judged by the National Buddy Poppy Committee Vice-Chairman Darrell Bencken, Christopher Davey, Michael Edwards and Robert VanKirk, I also want to make mention of Thomas Brennick, who was the Chairman of the Committee and unfortunately passed before he completed his year of appointment, as well as the 2011-2012 and 2012-

2013 Ladies Auxiliary veterans and family support directors, Deborah Griffin and Kathy Birch, respectively.

The displays were judged on effectiveness, clarity of theme, suitability, originality, beauty and the number of poppies used.

Category I is for the Public Promotion of a Poppy Campaign.

Honorable Mention goes to Ladies Auxiliary to the Leon Williams Post No. 4346, Toccoa, Georgia.

Third Place in Category I is LCPL Steven M. Chavez Post No. 12071 and its Ladies Auxiliary, Ruidoso, New Mexico.

Second Place goes to Fort Hays Post No. 9076 and its Ladies Auxiliary, Hays, Kansas.

First Place goes to Nelson-Scofield Post No. 4452 and its Ladies Auxiliary in Cannon Falls, Minnesota.

Category II is for the use of poppies in a Memorial or Inspirational Display.

Honorable Mention goes to Robert F. Glidden Post No. 758 and its Ladies Auxiliary, Saint Albans, Vermont.

Third Place is United Post No. 2975 and its Ladies Auxiliary, Beresford, South Dakota.

Second Place goes to Ladies Auxiliary to the Centralia Post No. 2055, Centralia, Illinois.

First Place goes to Roscoe Post No. 2955, Roscoe, Illinois.

Category III - Artistic or Decorative Use of Poppies.

Honorable Mention goes to Clifford E. Johnson Post No. 9759 and its Ladies Auxiliary, Loves Park, Illinois.

Third Place goes to Lieutenant Harold R. Cornwell Post No. 1298 and its Ladies Auxiliary, Bowling Green, Kentucky.

Second Place goes to Commander Jack E. Carleton Post No. 2111 and its Ladies Auxiliary, Chula Vista, California.

First Place goes to Hugo Matejcek Post No. 3723 and its Ladies Auxiliary, Owatonna, Minnesota.

Category IV is for using poppies in a Memorial or Inspirational Display by a Junior Girls or Sons of the VFW Unit.

Honorable Mention goes to Junior Girls Unit Ladies Auxiliary to the William Wharton Post No. 379, Yakima, Washington.

Third Place goes to Junior Girls Unit Ladies Auxiliary to the Kyle/Buda Post No. 12058, Kyle, Texas.

Second Place goes to Junior Girls Unit Ladies Auxiliary to the Fort Chippewa Post No. 936, Alexandria, Minnesota.

First Place goes to Junior Girls Unit Ladies Auxiliary to the Thibodaux Memorial Post No. 5097, Thibodaux, Louisiana.

The Director's Award is given to the Buddy Poppy display that, in the judges' opinion, most creatively and effectively represents the intent of the Buddy Poppy Program.

This year's recipient of the Director's Award is Ladies Auxiliary to the Centralia Post No. 2055, Centralia, Illinois. (Applause)

SILENT AUCTION DONATION TO THE VFW NATIONAL HOME

This marks the 12th consecutive Silent Auction we have had at the Convention. This year, 52 Departments donated items, many reflective of their home states and commonwealths. The purpose of the auction is

to raise money for issues that are close to the hearts of the VFW and its Auxiliaries. And, this year's recipient will be the VFW National Home for Children in Eaton Rapids, Michigan.

I am proud to announce that this year's auction garnered a total of \$7,358, and I am pleased to present this check to the 2012 Buddy Poppy Child Spencer Fleming, Dave Havelly and Patrice Greene. (Applause)

PRESENTATION BY GENERAL MOTORS

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF DeNOYER: A great number of current and retired General Motors employees have served in the U.S. Armed Forces, and GM has a long history of supporting the military.

During World War II, Detroit, home to General Motors, became known as the "Arsenal of Democracy" as GM plants were converted to the production of critical war material. This effort played a significant, yet often unheralded role in our great victories both in Europe and the Pacific, and over the years, General Motors has stayed committed to all those who have served our nation in times of war and peace.

GM has shown an enduring corporate commitment to the VFW. Over the past several years, they have presented VFW with several extremely generous donations in support of VFW programs that have then substantially benefited veterans, service members and their families.

Please welcome Steve Harrison, Maurice Staten and Sal Morana here with us today to share General Motors' rich history of veterans support.

REMARKS – MR. MAURICE STATEN – UAW-GM REPRESENTATIVE

MR. STATEN: Good morning. On behalf of the UAW Vice-President Joe Ashton, I bring you greetings, a special thanks to the Commander-in-Chief of the VFW, your staff and the general body of the delegates and guests. UAW and GM are honored to participate in this conference.

My name is Maurice Staten, and I am a UAW Assistant Director to Vice-President Joe Ashton, with responsibility as the Co-Director for the Quality Network and Community Liaison for the GM Department of the UAW.

It just so happens, as the Commander-in-Chief said, I hired into General Motors over 34 years ago into a plant which by size alone was quite intimidating. It was a mile long and a half mile wide. Can you imagine a facility like that all under one roof?

Well, there were many plaques to commemorate the great history of the participation during World War II. That plant built the B-24 Liberator. The Willow Run Assembly Plant was dedicated on June 16th, 1941, and the plant produced 8,685 bomber planes. Now, the facility has changed hands several times.

It was a great honor and a privilege to be an employee of that facility and to commemorate the rich history. I am proud to be here today with my partner, Steve Harrison, General Motors Manager at the UAW Center for Human Resources and a member of the Veterans Affinity Group at General Motors.

The UAW and GM partner with many activities. For example, we partnered to make sure that our plants are the safest in the world, which, by the way, our plants are the safest in the world.

The UAW represents General Motors' plants are the workplace

benchmark for safety in automotive segments.

We also partner to build cars, truck and cross-over vehicles that many independent surveys point to as being among the best quality and most fuel-efficient vehicles on the road today. And they are built right here in the USA.

I believe that is something that is very important to us. (Applause) As community liaison, one of the things I do is to go out and speak, and I would be remiss if I didn't do it here today. This time I have to take time out to thank President Barack Obama and the current Congress, and you, the taxpayer, for the bridge loan which kept General Motors in business and maintained good-paying UAW representative jobs right here in America. I thank you for that.

Thanks to the VFW for supporting us in getting those bridge loans from the government. Let's be clear. If it were not for those loans, we would not be here today supporting this conference, sir. Also, as a result, GM has restructured. Of course, we know the auto industry has recovered, and we are looking to hire new employees.

UAW Vice-President Joe Ashton and GM Vice-President Cathy Clegg are working on a hiring program for veterans, and the details will come later. They stated several times that "no veterans should be hungry, homeless or unemployed."

Among other things, which the UAW and GM partner, is support of the active military, of veterans and we proudly support the VFW National Home for Children. I don't have to tell you, not in this great organization, the great job this organization does. We are proud of the house we built for our former UAW President Stephen Peele.

By the way, we just didn't write a check to cover the cost, we actually had our trade persons, skilled tradesmen and women on the job laying bricks, pulling the electrical work, installing the plumbing. It was literally a labor of love.

We also recently hosted the Navy Week of UAW-GM Human Resources, and it was a great event. There was little doubt by the local Navy personnel back in the Southern Michigan region that UAW and GM stands with them.

Through our efforts, we have engaged to support a free call day, a calling card. It seems like a small thing, but when you are a soldier trying to communicate with a loved one, it is very monumental and very significant.

I am proud to be here today, and I share with my family the honors to make the check presentation to the VFW. I asked for a couple of comments, one from my brother-in-law, which has 24 years of service in the Navy; one from my son-in-law, which has less than just two years of service, both active in the military.

My brother-in-law responded. He is an AVEC Master Chief in the United States Navy, and now aboard the USS Abraham Lincoln CBM 72. His remarks were, "Please tell the VFW we thank you for your service. Thank you for all that you have done for this country. That group knows better than any that there is a cost to the price of freedom that we enjoy."

My son-in-law, Corporal Alendall Bradford of Combat Logistics, Regiment 1, CRL-1, Maintenance Battalion 4, currently in Afghanistan, he wrote, "I would like to say thank you to the veterans who served before us. It is by their example that we Marines, sailors, soldiers, guardsmen

and airmen can carry on the great tradition of our U.S. Armed Forces. We are constantly striving to better ourselves and perfect our crafts in order to provide this great nation the security that it deserves. No veteran's selfless service and sacrifices paid by both your union families will always be held in highest regard. We hope to continue in this honor with the path that you have set before us."

He goes on to say, "May God bless our nation, our veterans, who kept us safe." He signs off by saying, "Semper Fi, Hoorah." (Applause)

Steve may have a few words, but I certainly want to present you with this check for \$50,000.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF DeNOYER: God bless you, sir, and thank you. (Applause)

REMARKS - MR. STEVE HARRISON – GENERAL MOTORS

MR. HARRISON: As Maurice mentioned, I am a GM Manager for General Motors. In a very specific way, I am very much like you. I served for 20 years active duty in the United States Air Force, and next month I will celebrate my 18th year with General Motors.

In case you have not heard, General Motors is back. Just take a look at some of our quality vehicles that we have out on the road, and the dealerships, and you will see that we are there. We are now a Top 50 Fortune 500 Company. As my partner and friend, Maurice, stated, we have a long proud history of supporting active duty and military veterans.

For as long as General Motors has been in business, and that is over 100 years, we have stood behind our employees who served this nation. Today, nearly 5,000 UAW and GM employees are veterans. Additionally, 261 of those employees are current, active reservists.

Throughout the years, General Motors has had 60,000 GM employees who were veterans of the United States Armed Services. To say thanks to them, we go well beyond what is considered the legal commitments to seniority and wage protection.

For the employees that are called to active duty related to Homeland Security, as well as those on short-term military leave, Reserve and Guard, we continue to protect their benefits and pay through the difference between what they make in the military and what they would have made with General Motors. In short, we are with them when they put on the uniform and we are with them when they take the uniform off.

We make it a point, as Maurice said, to hire veterans. GM and the GM Foundation are contributing \$250,000 to the U.S. Chamber of Commerce and the National Chamber Foundations for hiring our heroes, veterans and their spouses.

GM has also qualified veterans to fill some salaried and hourly job vacancies, as Maurice mentioned, and is encouraging a network of more than 7,000 suppliers and dealers to hire veterans and spouses who are also looking for jobs.

As Maurice mentioned, we are hiring veterans. The GM acquisition team sends updates about job openings to state employment agencies, veterans groups, and out-placement firms. In fact, the GM Careers website includes a veterans section on their home page. So, check it out.

For retired and active duty vets, GM also offers military discounts on our vehicles. That is most of the vehicles in the product line. So, if you

go to gm.com and look at militarydiscount.com, you will see what those discounts are.

Again, as Maurice and I, General Motors, UAW, we thank each and every one of you for your service in the past and your continued service. May God bless you and the United States of America. (Applause)

INTRODUCTION OF LESLIE BRYANT, REGIONAL MARKETING MANAGER, BUFFALO WILD WINGS

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF DeNOYER: Thank you, gentlemen. This year, the VFW was proud to continue for the second year an exciting partnership with Buffalo Wild Wings.

During the month of May, coinciding with Military Appreciation Month, participating Buffalo Wild Wings locations donated ten percent of a guest's total food purchase to the VFW Foundation when that customer showed their military I.D., VFW membership card or a "Return the Favor" card.

Thanks to the generosity of Buffalo Wild Wings and their great patrons, of which I am one, countless military families will receive our support in their future time of need.

We look forward to building on our relationship with Buffalo Wild Wings for many years to come and are so grateful for all that the Buffalo Wild Wings team has already given us.

Here today, on behalf of Buffalo Wild Wings, is the Regional Manager of Marketing, Leslie Bryant. Leslie, it is good to have you again. (Applause)

REMARKS – MS. LESLIE BRYANT – BUFFALO WILD WINGS

MS. BRYANT: Good morning. Does anybody need to get up and move around and stretch? You have been sitting here for a long time. \$200,000 this year, that's a lot of wings. I wanted to share a story with you, because I have listened this morning and am so honored to be here today, thinking about all the commonalities of how we have all served and have family members who have served.

We have heard about the impact the Foundation has on our soldiers, but I wanted to share a story with you about how it impacted me personally.

My son is a member of the 934th Red Bull Battalion in Minnesota. Before he deployed last year, he called me. He was in Wisconsin with his unit. They had four days that they were stuck in Wisconsin, that they could have been home with their families, and they were going to deploy for a year.

He called me and he said, "Mom, what am I going to do? I can't get home." I said, "I will pay for a rental car." He said, "There is not enough cars. If we can't come together, we are not coming."

So, I called John Lowe, and John had buses there the next morning, and the Foundation brought all 72 home. (Applause)

So, it means a lot. It means a lot to everybody. I thank you and Buffalo Wild Wings thanks you, too. (Applause)

INTRODUCTION OF MOC SUPREME COMMANDER JOE McCULLOUGH

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF DeNOYER: A trip to almost any VA Hospital

will reveal the importance of the work of the Military Order of the Cootie. Each year, the Cooties spend thousands of hours bringing comfort to our hospitalized veterans. Their commitment to “keep ‘em smiling in beds of white” is a grand tribute to the service and sacrifice of all veterans.

Our next guest was elected Supreme Commander of the Military Order of the Cootie at that organization’s 92nd Supreme Scratch in San Antonio in September 2011.

Please welcome the Supreme Commander of the Military Order of the Cootie of the United States of America, Joe McCullough, from the great state of Texas. (Applause)

REMARKS – MOC SUPREME COMMANDER McCULLOUGH

MOC SUPREME COMMANDER McCULLOUGH: Thank you. Listen, Cooties, Comrades, friends, Commander-in-Chief, all the Past Commanders-in-Chief and all the comrades that want to be Commander-in-Chief, family and friends:

My name is Joe McCullough, and I am the Supreme Commander of the Military Order of the Cootie. I am here this morning representing all Cooties and making this report to you.

Welcome to Reno. Conventions are one of my favorite events when all the VFW members and Cooties come together to make decisions for the ensuing year and beyond, and we elect new officers for the year to ensure that we are represented at our respective Councils of Administration.

I am humbled, honored and proud to represent all Cooties as I conclude my journey as Supreme Commander. Your efforts and dedication are shown by your progress this year.

Please continue to work for all veterans. Thank you to Supreme President Gloria Roberts for working together for the past three years running through the chairs. We worked together to help us turn our ideas into realities.

The Military Order of the Cootie is the honor degree of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States. We do the hospital work for the VFW. One of our mottos is “keep ‘em smiling in beds of white.” This year alone, we continued to provide encouragement and humor to hospitalized veterans throughout the Department of Veterans Affairs facilities in the U.S., and our credit totaled over \$3.3 million in hospital credits. Additionally, over \$2 million in credit hours occurred in state and private facilities throughout the world.

MOC members are recruiters, too. The MOC members recruited over 5,200 new or reinstated members into the VFW. There were also cash donations to help out local VFW Posts that amounted to over \$300,000.

I teamed up with the Supreme President, Gloria Roberts, and our MOC Auxiliary to raise funds to refurbish the 4-H rabbit barn at the VFW National Home for Children. This represents a \$20,000 investment donation by the Cooties and Sisters that provides an opportunity for the children to learn discipline and accountability. This was the Supreme Commander and Supreme President’s annual project.

I am very proud to be here today. I am very proud to have worked together with Commander-in-Chief Richard DeNoyer. Our paths have crossed many times this year. I have been invited to attend all National VFW Council of Administration meetings this year, and made it to each and

every one. I have learned a lot, and working together is the key to success.

Please don't be afraid of the Cooties since we are all VFW members first, that we are invited to join the honor degree of the VFW.

Thank you to my wife and family for their understanding and sacrifice while I am away, and sometimes even when I am home. "Keep 'em smiling in beds of white."

Membership is the key for us to survive and thrive, and to increase and multiply. This concludes my report. Thank you all. God bless all who are here, at home and abroad. Thank you. (Applause)

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF DeNOYER: Thank you, Joe.

Our Adjutant General, Allen "Gunner" Kent will introduce the Past Commanders-in-Chief present.

INTRODUCTION OF PAST COMMANDERS-IN-CHIEF

ADJUTANT GENERAL KENT: The following Past Commanders-in-Chief are attending this Convention:

1977-1978 - Dr. John Wasyluk
1983-1984 - Clifford G. Olson, Jr.
1984-1985 - Billy Ray Cameron
1985-1986 - John S. Staum
1988-1989 - Larry W. Rivers
1989-1990 - Walter G. Hogan
1991-1992 - Robert E. Wallace
1992-1993 - John M. Carney
1993-1994 - George R. Cramer
1994-1995 - Allen F. "Gunner" Kent
1995-1996 - Paul A. Spera
1996-1997 - James E. Nier
1997-1998 - John E. Moon
1998-1999 - Thomas A. Pouliot
1999-2000 - John W. Smart
2000-2001 - John F. Gwizdak
2003-2004 - Edward S. Banas, Sr.
2005-2006 - James Mueller
2006-2007 - Gary L. Kurpius
2007-2008 - George Lisicki
2008-2009 - Glen M. Gardner, Jr.
2009-2010 - Thomas J. Tradewell
2010-2011 - Richard L. Eubank

PRESENTATION OF DISTINGUISHED SERVICE MEDAL TO COMRADE LARRY BERMAN

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF DeNOYER: Our next guest is being recognized for his years of devoted service to the VFW and the entire veteran community with the Distinguished Service Medal and Citation. Larry Berman served as Assistant Director of Field Operations and prior to that spent more than 24 years with the Department of Veterans Affairs. As Assistant Director, he supervised VFW's National Network of Benefits Discharge Counselors. The BDD Program was established on military facilities to provide a one-stop-shop for departing military personnel,

providing assistance for VA entitlements and benefits.

Larry's involvement in the BDD Program ensured that departing military personnel, including National Guardsmen and Reservists, received first-class claims assistance to make the process as smooth as possible.

Larry's outstanding record is one that truly sets him apart from the crowd. We owe him our greatest thanks and gratitude for his hard work and efforts. He has proven time and again that he is the best there is when it comes to being a service officer.

It is now my honor to introduce and award Larry Berman with the VFW Distinguished Service Medal and Citation Award.

ADJUTANT GENERAL KENT: "Distinguished Service Medal and Citation awarded to Larry Berman in genuine appreciation and esteemed recognition of a combined 36 years of exceptional and intrepid service to the Department of Veterans Affairs and later to the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, where he fulfilled the position of Assistant Director of Field Operations.

"His unyielding commitment to the VFW and the entire veteran community, as well as his faithful dedication and superior expertise with which he performed his duties, have earned him the highest admiration and are in the finest traditions of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States.

"In Witness Whereof, we have hereunto set our hands and the official seal of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, this 25th day of July, 2012."

Signed by Richard L. DeNoyer, Commander-in-Chief, and Allen "Gunner" Kent, Adjutant General. (Applause)

If I could just take a point of personal privilege here and just say that Larry is probably the finest hard working service officer that I have ever seen in my career with the VFW. (Applause)

REMARKS – COMRADE LARRY BERMAN

COMRADE BERMAN: Good morning. Thank you very much. I am humbled to receive an award for something that all of us owe each other, that caring about veterans, active duty people, Guardsmen and Reservists. There is no higher calling in my mind.

When I left the service back in 1968, I was told, "Take this package home. It has got VA information in it. Read it, it might help you."

That's no longer the case. We are committed, the VFW, and especially the National Veterans Service, to assist people to make sure their claims are complete, properly submitted, and then stay with them for the rest of their lives. We are there forever. We are not just passing in the parade.

When I left the service, I looked at my DD-214, and I was a Combat Engineer, and it said Combat Projectionist. So, I said to the person who gave it to me, "This is wrong." He said, "Let the VA fix it." So, I still have it to this day, because the VA just didn't have the time. So, I guess at any time there is combat I can show a movie.

I want to again thank everyone for allowing me and the staff that I worked with, the veterans field people, the National, to work with the VA and the Benefits Delivery at Discharge. We are located on 14 sites. Hopefully down the road we will grow. But our mission is to make sure that we talk to veterans, we interest them in getting the benefits and

entitlements that they are entitled to, to not say, "Well, it is not me, it is you." Then it is you so that good service makes good members. And I thank you, and God bless the VFW. (Applause)

NATIONAL HOME TRUSTEES NOMINEES

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF DeNOYER: Our Adjutant General, "Gunner" Kent, will read the Nominations for National Home Trustees.

ADJUTANT GENERAL KENT: At this time I will now read the nominations for the National Home Trustees:

District Seven for 2012-2018, and representing Iowa, Michigan and Wisconsin, Merridy Lewis of Kalamazoo, Michigan. Merridy has been a VFW National Home Life member since January 19, 1996, and is endorsed by the Ladies Auxiliary to the Veterans of Foreign Wars Department of Michigan.

There are three nominations for District Eleven for 2012-2018, and representing Alaska, Arizona, Colorado, Kansas, Montana, Pacific Areas, Utah and Wyoming:

Bruce Dolan of Aurora, Colorado, has been a VFW National Home Life Member since October 29, 2010. He is endorsed by the VFW Department of Colorado.

Chris Kozakiewicz of Show Low, Arizona, has been a VFW National Home Life Member since December 7, 1998, and is endorsed by the VFW Department of Arizona.

Barbara L. Stodgell of Topeka, Kansas, has been a National Home Life Member since July 21, 2010. She is endorsed by the VFW and Ladies Auxiliary Department of Kansas.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF DeNOYER: At this time, we will have a presentation by Past National Chaplain Ted Bowers to myself.

PRESENTATION OF LEGION OF HONOR BRONZE MEDAL FROM CHAPEL OF FOUR CHAPLAINS TO COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF DeNOYER

PAST NATIONAL CHAPLAIN BOWERS: Comrades, it is my privilege and honor to represent the Chapel of Four Chaplains in presenting this distinguished award, the Legion of Honor Bronze Medallion Award.

On January 23rd, 1943, the USAT Dorchester carrying troops left New York harbor bound for Greenland. Just after midnight on February 3rd, an enemy submarine fired a torpedo that struck the Dorchester, destroying the electrical supply and releasing clouds of steam and ammonia gas.

Many on board died instantly. Some were trapped below deck.

The testimony of the survivors tells us that the sole order and fragment of hope during this chaos came from four chaplains, who calmly guided men to their boat stations.

They opened the storage locker and distributed jackets. When the supply of life jackets was exhausted, the four chaplains either gave away or forced upon other young men their own life jackets.

As the Dorchester sank, the chaplains gathered together and led the men around them in prayer and a hymn, and they linked their arms together in brotherhood, and with their heads bowed in prayer they sang "Beneath the Waves."

It was a heroic act and it was especially significant because of the

identity of the four young men: two Protestant ministers, a Catholic priest and a Jewish rabbi.

The Chapel of Four Chaplains in Philadelphia serves as a memory of these brave men and carries their message of inter-faith, cooperation and selfless service to every part of our country.

To recognize and encourage acts of volunteerism, brotherhood and sacrifice among Americans of every age and every station in life, the chapel established the Legion of Honor Program. The Legion of Honor Award is given in recognition of exceptional selfless service on the part of an individual which contributes to the well-being of his or her community, and to a spirit of inter-faith cooperation.

It is my very, very proud honor to present the Legion of Honor Bronze Medallion Award to our Commander-in-Chief of the Veterans of Foreign Wars, Richard L. DeNoyer. (Applause)

INTRODUCTION OF GENE CASTAGNETTI – NATIONAL MEMORIAL CEMETERY OF THE PACIFIC

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF DeNOYER: I am very pleased to introduce our next guest, the Director of the National Memorial Cemetery of the Pacific, Gene Castagnetti.

Located in Central Honolulu in a long-extinct volcano called Punchbowl Crater, few National Cemeteries can compete with the dramatic natural setting of the National Memorial Cemetery of the Pacific.

The cemetery opened to the public on July 19, 1949, with services for five war dead: an unknown serviceman, two Marines, an Army lieutenant and one civilian.

Today, the cemetery serves as the final resting place for 33,230 servicemen and women from four wars. More than five million people visit the cemetery each year to pay their respects to the dead and to enjoy the view. One of the most breathtaking views of the Island of Oahu can be found while standing at the highest point on the crater's rim offering a panoramic view of Honolulu.

Ladies and gentlemen, please welcome the Director of the National Memorial Cemetery of the Pacific, Gene Castagnetti.

REMARKS – MR. GENE CASTAGNETTI

MR. CASTAGNETTI: Well, good morning, and aloha. Where is my Hawaii delegation out there, Stan Hernandez and company?

I have to share with you that I was born in Massachusetts, so I acknowledge also the Massachusetts delegation. I want to thank the membership of the VFW and our Commander-in-Chief, Richard DeNoyer, for inviting me out here and have the opportunity to address you on the important subject that we are going to be building a memorial dedicated to the Vietnam veterans.

Now, can I have the Vietnam veterans in the audience to please stand, if you can, just for a moment? God bless you. (Applause)

Now, as you know, for many years Vietnam veterans were stigmatized, were called derogatory stories, negative names because they forgot that you, the warriors, fought the war that the politicians made.

It has been many years since people have really given you a legitimate

welcome home. We are starting, as I speak right now, with the construction of a Vietnam War Pavilion at the National Memorial Cemetery of the Pacific, which will be dedicated to Vietnam veterans.

Those of you who have been there before, we have map galleries depicting the World War II campaigns, and the Korean War. But this will be the first edifice paid with taxpayers' dollars to honor the Vietnam veterans.

It will be built by the American Battle Monuments Commission. This is the agency in Washington, D.C., that has built such cemeteries as Normandy and Florence and Epinal. They have built 24 ABMC cemeteries in 15 nations across the world. But this will be the first one that is at government expense to honor you, the Vietnam veterans.

Now, of course, VA Secretary Shinseki is very enthusiastic about this, and Max Cleland, Senator Max Cleland, a triple amputee from the Vietnam War, is leading and paying for this national tribute to the Vietnam veterans.

We have also had the opportunity to have Dan Rather. This Lady Columbia represents grieving motherhood. There is an inscription below there written by Abraham Lincoln when he wrote a letter to Mrs. Bixby of Massachusetts, who had lost five sons in the Great American Civil War. The inscription says, "The solemn pride that must be yours to have made such a sacrifice upon the altar of freedom."

No one knows more about the sacrifice for freedom than the men and women gathered in this room today. Dan Rather came out and we did a one-hour program on the National Cemetery. He was so impressed that when we get the Vietnam Pavilion done, he will come out and do a specific event honoring the Vietnam veterans.

This is a rendering of the National Cemetery Memorial called the Honolulu Memorial. I know it is a little hard to see, but if you look at the two flagpoles, those two edifices in travertine marble is the new Vietnam map where the pavilion will be built.

As we talked here this morning, there is travertine stone marble being quarried in Idaho. It will be shipped to Hawaii this month, and construction is on, and we aim to dedicate this memorial on Veterans Day 2012. Now, I know that doesn't give you all a lot of time to plan, but if you can come out to Hawaii for Veterans Day this November, this will be dedicated at that time.

We have listed in the courts of the missing, the marble courts below, some 28,778 names of American servicemen lost or buried at sea memorialized just in that one area. Now, 2,504 from the Vietnam War, 8,190 from Korea, and some 18,000 from World War II, just in the Pacific arena.

It is very hard to see, but this is a map, a mosaic map of Vietnam with your respective corps, I-corps 2, 3 and 4 corps, and there will be an opportunity for you to come out there with your children, your grandchildren, other members of the family, look at that map and you will be able to pinpoint where you fought by grid square, where you did your service, where you made your sacrifice, where you spilled your blood.

Many, many veterans come out and look at the World War II and the Korean War campaigns and can point to their family members and say, "This is where I served." It is a bonding moment, and I encourage you to come forward. It shows the Ho Chi Minh Trail, and the infiltration routes.

Map 2 shows most of the China Sea. It shows where the B-52s took off from Guam, where the Air Force flew out of Otowa in Taiwan, and where

the Navy was on Yankee Station, or down in the Brown Water areas of the Mekong Delta.

Again, veterans will be able to see their areas where they fought and served. This slide takes you in there and it shows you the bigger picture of what is going on and will address not only the Vietnam Wall but the chapel World War II memorial mosaics and the Korean War mosaics. This is a groundbreaking that took place in May.

I, along with Max Cleland and a number of people from the ABMC initiated this. It is an exciting opportunity. The National Memorial Cemetery of the Pacific is one of 131 VA national shrines that support and remember and validate the service and sacrifice of our veterans. But this is the only national shrine that will have a memorial and a tribute dedicated to both World War II, the Korean and the Vietnam veterans.

It is important to understand that this is funded by the government unlike the Vietnam Wall, which is dedicated to contributions from donations and support by the foundations. Eventually, we will build an interpretative center in 16 different languages, because this national shrine that I have had the honor to be the head custodian of, we have about four million visitors a year.

Now, I have had the opportunity, as your Commander-in-Chief knows, to host some of the highest level of dignitaries in the world. I have hosted two presidents, four or five prime ministers, foreign heads of state, the Emperor and Empress of Japan. Believe me, they pale in comparison to what you, the Vietnam veterans, World War II veterans, Korean War veterans have achieved.

This is the first opportunity for your service, your sacrifice to be recognized. As they say, all gave some, but some gave all. This memorial tribute is long overdue, but it is coming to you.

Thank you very much for the opportunity, and God bless you and God bless America. Thank you very much. (Applause)

PRESENTATION TO COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF BY THE 2011-2012 DEPARTMENT COMMANDERS

ADJUTANT GENERAL KENT: The 2011-2012 State Commanders are now gathering here on the stage for a special presentation. Bruce Hollinger, Past Nevada State Commander, is the representative.

REMARKS – COMRADE BRUCE HOLLINGER

COMRADE HOLLINGER: Hi, cousins. It is my pleasure to be the representative of the 2011-2012 Department Commanders. You see them lined up here in front, and we have a little gift for the Commander-in-Chief to show our appreciation for his inspired leadership during our year. With that, I will mention it.

Chief, we are going to pull this sword out. It is not aimed at you. We have a Marine Corps officer's sword engraved with Richard L. DeNoyer, and we have the plaque with all the Department Commanders names on it. It says, "Richard L. DeNoyer, Veterans of Foreign Wars, presented by his Department Commanders." Thank you. (Applause)

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF DeNOYER: Thank you, comrades. I sincerely appreciate it. I am humbled and it is a great gift for a Marine. You can't

beat it. That will go in my office on my wall. Thank you very, very much. I will see you this evening, by the way.

PROCEEDINGS OF THE VFW 113TH NATIONAL CONVENTION BE
SUBMITTED TO THE SPEAKER OF THE HOUSE

ADJUTANT GENERAL KENT: I move that the proceedings of the Veterans of Foreign Wars 113th National Convention be submitted to the Speaker of the House for printing as a House document in accordance with Public Law 620, of the 90th Congress, approved October 22, 1968, and entitled as Title 44, United States Code, Section 1332.

COMRADE JOHN McNEILL: I am John McNeill, a delegate from Post 5412, Brooke, Virginia. I second the motion.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF DeNOYER: You have heard the motion and the second. Is there any discussion? All those in favor will say "aye"; all opposed "nay". The "ayes" have it.

Having no further business, it is now my pleasure to dismiss the Committee on General Resolutions. As always, a job well done by you, Chairman George Lisicki, Vice-Chairmen Jack Carney, John Furgess, Gary Kurpius, and the good members of your Committee. My thanks to all the chairman, vice-chairmen and to all the members of each of the Committees for your time and dedicated efforts. I would also like to thank all the elected and appointed officers for their hard work as well.

Other than the Election and Installation of Officers, is there any other further business to come before this Convention? Hearing none, I will call on the Adjutant General for any announcements he may have.

ADJUTANT GENERAL KENT: I have no announcements. Let's get on with the Nomination of Officers.

NOMINATION OF COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF DeNOYER: We will now proceed with the nominations and election of the 2012-2013 National Officers. I will now open with the nomination for the office of Commander-in-Chief. Is there any nomination for the Commander-in-Chief?

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF CARNEY: Thank you, Commander-in-Chief. I am indeed honored this morning to have the opportunity to nominate John E. Hamilton of Florida to the high office of Commander-in-Chief of the Veterans of Foreign Wars. John is a man of uncommon commitment, courage, candor and competence.

John was raised in a family that recognized the need of the military. His father served in the Marine Corps and retired from the Marine Corps as a Chief Warrant Officer. He was privileged to serve with the 4th Marines in China in the 1930s. He served in World War II in Saipan, Iwo Jima and other areas. He also served in Korea. John's father is now deceased.

He had the opportunity to discuss with John the need to continue what he was doing and how important it was to make sure that this country stays free and the veterans of this nation are also so recognized. John's mother, Barbara, lives in Rockport, Maine, and I hope today that she has the opportunity to witness what is taking place. She is 102 years young. (Applause)

John attended various schools in and around the Jacksonville area. He

attended Fletcher High School and graduated. Of course, he attended the various grade schools and middle schools. John attended and is also a graduate with honors from the Georgia Military Academy in 1967.

John enlisted in the Marine Corps in September 1968, and trained as a rifleman. He arrived in Vietnam in January 1969, and served there with the 1st Marine Division. He has three Purple Hearts.

In May 1970, John transferred to the Marine Corps Base in Hawaii, where he served as a Platoon Sergeant with the 106th Recoilless Rifle Platoon Headquarters Company, 1st Battalion, 3rd Marines, and he served there as a trainer, a safety water trainer. He not only trained those in Hawaii, but the new Marines that attended Hawaii, he provided that training to them.

After his discharge in 1970, John became active in the inner-city youth and community activities which he recognized that they needed some assistance and leadership. He was recognized for his efforts in that area by President Carter and President George H. W. Bush.

John decided he had to do something to continue to be active. He embarked on a 15-year professional career as a wrestler, starting out as "Johnny Montana", and he achieved his greatest fame as the masked "Dr. Death", which he took that name for his service in recognition of what he went through in Vietnam.

He began working as a manufacturer's representative of the Dynasurf Chemical Corporation based in Baltimore, Maryland. John started his own company, the E.H. Hamilton Enterprises, Inc., a janitorial supply business in 1984, which he sold in 2004.

He joined the VFW in 1974, where he started his leadership career. He had the occasion one time to sit down with his father and other VFW members at a meeting where they were discussing a trip that they were going to take to the Lake City VA Hospital. John never having gone to that other than being treated himself for the war wounds that he received, and he received three Purple Hearts, so John decided that he would go there with those on a trip. He went there.

Impressed by the fact that they needed visitation from members of the VFW, John began a leadership career of getting involved with VFW commitments to the hospital, the VFW going with him all the time. He was a three-time Post Commander at Post 6909 in Jacksonville. He was an All American District Commander; he was an All American Department Commander.

In 1988, John realizing that the Department of Florida lacked its own service officer office, it was provided by the State of Florida, it was time for them to have their own office. Finding the budget or finding the troops that were going to take over that service office were his responsibilities for his staff. John got that office going, and they, at that time were serving well over 30,000 veterans, and they needed the recognition from the Veterans of Foreign Wars, not the State of Florida.

John made sure that happened. He was recognized as the Veteran of the Year for his activities involving service officers of the State of Florida.

He was elected a member of the Council of Administration, District J, 1989-'91. Realizing again that he wanted to do something to make sure that the hospitals were recognized, John became active in the Military Order of the Cootie, because he knew that they made visitations. John went through the chairs of the Military Order of the Cootie, and he was the

Supreme Commander in 1992-'93.

John served on many National Committees and has served for six years on the VFW National Home Board of Trustees, the last year of which he was the President of the National Home Board of Trustees.

John has two sons, John, Jr., who lives and works in California and is in the TV and motion picture business. He is the co-owner and managing partner of Moonglow Productions and President of H.A.M. Productions. He has three daughters.

Eric, who is with us today and his friend Kristen, resides in Jacksonville, Florida. Eric manages a fishing camp and guide service in the Jacksonville area. He is a 32nd Degree Mason and a Shriner, and a boat crew qualified member of the Coast Guard Auxiliary, also a volunteer firefighter and a member of the Duvall County Emergency Response team.

I am telling you we are ready for the leadership of John E. Hamilton to follow in the steps of our great Commander Richard DeNoyer.

I am pleased again to nominate to the high office of Commander-in-Chief John E. Hamilton. (Applause)

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF DeNOYER: Do we have a second?

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF JIM NIER: I am Jim Nier, a delegate from Post 8919, Texas. Comrades, I rise to second the nomination for Commander-in-Chief the name of the comrade now serving as our Senior Vice Commander-in-Chief of this great National Organization. John Hamilton has served with distinction during his first two years in the national chairs. He has traveled the country and indeed the world on behalf of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States representing us at the highest levels of government, both in the United States and abroad.

Those of you who know John as I do, or who have had the opportunity to visit with him at your Posts, Districts or Departments, Conventions or elsewhere, know that he is a true veterans' advocate.

If you have heard him speak, you know and understand the passion he has for our great organization and for those that we serve. He continues to have a vision for our National Organization that addresses the many issues and concerns to include those that have been deliberated at this Convention and previous Conventions. He will never be satisfied with the status quo, but instead will continue to look for better and innovative ways to accomplish our goals with the ever-present priority of what will be best for the entire organization and all of its members.

His compassionate, caring, visionary leadership style, along with his no-nonsense approach to the challenges we face as an organization give him the exceptional ability to rally and support not only for himself but for other members of his leadership team that is necessary to make the changes and to implement new initiatives that will strengthen the Veterans of Foreign Wars in the years ahead.

He has demonstrated over and over that he is highly qualified for and is ready to assume the duties of the highest leadership position in our National Organization. Therefore, it is truly an honor and privilege for me to second the nomination of my friend, Comrade John E. Hamilton, Post 7909, Florida, for the position of Commander-in-Chief of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States for 2012-2013. Thank you.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF DeNOYER: Thank you, Jim. Do you accept the nomination?

SENIOR VICE COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF HAMILTON: I accept,

Commander.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF DeNOYER: Thank you. We want to make sure we do that. Are there any other nominations? Any other nominations? Are there any other nominations? Do we have a motion and second that the nominations be closed and the Adjutant General cast one unanimous vote?

Microphone No. 2.

COMRADE WAYNE CARRIGNAN: I am Wayne Carrignan, Department Commander of Florida, delegate from Post 5625. It is my honor to stand here this morning before you representing the delegates of Florida and the membership, and I would like to move that the nominations be closed and the Adjutant General cast one unanimous vote for John E. Hamilton for 2012-2013 Commander-in-Chief. Thank you.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF DeNOYER: We now have a motion. Do we have a second?

COMRADE DAN DUFFY (Post 1966 - Florida): I am Dan Duffy, Past State Commander. I second the nomination.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF DeNOYER: Thank you. We have now a motion made and seconded that the nominations be closed and the Adjutant General cast one unanimous ballot for John E. Hamilton for Commander-in-Chief.

Is there any question? All those in favor will say "aye"; those opposed "no".

ADJUTANT GENERAL KENT: Comrade Commander-in-Chief, pursuant to the power and authority vested in me, I cast one unanimous ballot for John E. Hamilton from the great Sunshine State of Florida to be the next Commander-in-Chief of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States for the 2012-2013 year.

REMARKS - COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF-ELECT HAMILTON

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF-ELECT HAMILTON: You will hear more from me later, so I just want to say to each of you thank you so much. I pledge to you that I will give it my best, the great Marine Corps try. We will get this thing done. Thank you very much. (Applause)

SERGEANT-AR-ARMS O'BRIEN: National Commander-in-Chief-Elect, it is an honor to escort you, your family and your friends and your delegations around the hall, sir.

Mr. Maestro, the United States Marine Corps. (Applause)

NOMINATION OF SENIOR VICE COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF DeNOYER: Is there any nomination for Senior Vice Commander-in-Chief?

COMRADE DAVID LANTZ (Post 1130 – Indiana): Comrade Commander-in-Chief, Comrade Thien asked me to keep this short, and at that I am pretty good. It is my honor and privilege to nominate William "Bill" Thien for the high office of Senior Vice Commander-in-Chief for the year 2012-2013. Thank you.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF DeNOYER: Are there any other nominations?

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF ED BANAS: Commander-in-Chief, thank you. Good morning, comrades: I am Edward Banas, Past Commander-in-Chief, a Life Member of VFW Post 10004 in Jewett City,

Connecticut.

I rise to second the nomination of Comrade William "Bill" Thien from Georgetown, Indiana, for the high and honorable office of Senior Vice Commander-in-Chief of the Veterans of Foreign Wars for the membership year 2012-2013.

Bill has maintained, comrades, the rich and proud traditions of the Veterans of Foreign Wars for decades. As such, he has earned the well-deserved reputation of selfless service as well as the respect of countless members of our organization.

Bill, I do this nomination with admiration and gratitude for your service. (Applause)

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF DeNOYER: Are there any other nominations? Are there any other nominations? Any other nominations? Hearing none, I recognize Microphone No. 2.

COMRADE DAVE HAVELY: Comrade Commander-in-Chief, I am Dave Havelly, Post 5864, Greenwood, Indiana. I move that the nominations be closed and that the Adjutant General cast one unanimous vote for William Thien as Senior Vice Commander-in-Chief for the year 2012-2013.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF DeNOYER: Do we have a second?

COMRADE RODNEY FUNK (Post 2689 – Indiana): Commander-in-Chief, I am Rodney Funk, Commander of Indiana. It is my distinct honor to second that motion, sir.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF DeNOYER: Thank you. We have a motion and a second that nominations be closed and the Adjutant General cast a unanimous ballot for William Thien as Senior Vice Commander-in-Chief. All those in favor will signify by the usual sign of "aye"; those opposed. The "ayes" have it.

ADJUTANT GENERAL KENT: Commander-in-Chief, by power and authority vested in me, I cast one unanimous ballot for William A. Thien from the great state of Indiana, for the high office of Senior Vice Commander-in-Chief of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States for 2012-2013.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF DeNOYER: Comrades, you have elected William A. Thien as Senior Vice Commander-in-Chief.

Bill, do you have some words?

REMARKS – SENIOR VICE COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF-ELECT THIEN

SENIOR VICE COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF-ELECT THIEN: Please be seated. Good morning. You know, I got my itinerary this morning and beside my name, and under it, it says "Brief Remarks" in parentheses, which is not unusual, but it was in bold and underlined, so I get it. But, thank you, thank you, for the honor and privilege that you have bestowed on me serving this great organization at the national level.

You know, it is both humbling and exciting at the same time. You know, anyone can be a member of this organization, fill out an application and pay your dues, but not everyone can be a leader of this organization. I can tell you this, rest assured, each and every individual that has been at this Convention and in this room right now are leaders of our great organization.

You know, you have something that you can't buy, you can't sell nor can you trade for. It is called heart; it is called heart.

To the Hamilton team, I am so excited to get going and get started in a new VFW year. To our Commander-in-Chief Richard DeNoyer, I want to thank you for your guidance that you have given me over the past year. You know, I have been to 14 or 15 Departments since August. You have been great. Your hospitality has been great. I felt right at home.

I have got to tell you, when you are away from your regular home, you certainly make that much nicer for us. I have got to say this: I wouldn't be here today if it wasn't for my wife, Linda, my family, Post 3281, New Albany, Indiana, the 8th District of Indiana, and certainly the Department of Indiana, and the Big Ten Conference. I want to thank you for that.

I am proud of each and every one in this room, because as sure as I am standing here, you have made the difference in the lives of many veterans and their families.

I look forward to visiting your Departments. I promise you it is on the list. I have not got there this year, but I will be there.

God bless each and every one of you. (Applause)

SERGEANT-AT-ARMS O'BRIEN: Comrade Senior Vice Commander-in-Chief-Elect, it is an honor for the National Sergeants to escort you around the hall and with that, Mr. Maestro, the United States Navy.

NOMINATION OF JUNIOR VICE COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF DeNOYER: I will now open the nominations for the office of Junior Vice Commander-in-Chief. Is there any nominations for Junior Vice Commander-in-Chief?

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF GARY KURPIUS: Comrade Commander-in-Chief, I am Gary Kurpius, a delegate from Post 9365, Wasilla, Alaska.

Comrade Commander-in-Chief, National Officers, Delegates to this 113th National Convention, I am pleased and honored to place the name of John Stroud into nomination for the high office of Junior Vice Commander-in-Chief for the ensuing year.

The Western Conference elected John as the National Junior Vice Commander-in-Chief designee in San Antonio, Texas. He is the first Nevadan to be elected to this office.

John served in the United States Air Force from 1976 to 1997, retiring as a Master Sergeant, 1st Sergeant.

He earned his VFW eligibility from his service with the 51st Fighter Wing, Osan Air Base, Republic of Korea, in 1992-93 as a Flight Operations Superintendent.

From 1993 to '95, he was Flight Operations Superintendent in the 452nd Flight Test, "B" Squadron in Edwards Air Force Base in California.

He graduated from the United States Air Force 1st Sergeant Academy in 1995, at Maxwell Air Force Base, Alabama.

In 1996, he was named as the 99th Support Group 1st Sergeant of the Nellis Air Force Base in Nevada. He also holds a Bachelor of Science Degree in Professional Aeronautics from Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University.

In 1997, John joined VFW Post 10047 in Las Vegas, Nevada, where he became a Life Member. He is a two-time All State Post Commander in 1999 and 2000, and in 2002 he was named All American District Commander.

In 2003, he transferred his Life Membership to VFW Post 2313 in Hawthorne, Nevada. He earned All American, Department Commander status in 2007, and All American Post Commander status in 2011.

He received the Triple Crown All American Award in 2011. He has held numerous VFW national appointments and served on several VFW National Committees, including the Patriotic Rally Chairman for the 107th National Convention here in Reno, Nevada. He was Vice-Chairman of the VFW National Veterans Service Committee.

In June 2012, John culminated his career in public service with Mineral County, Nevada, serving as the county building official. John is a VFW Gold Legacy Life Member, a Life Member of the VFW Military Order of the Cootie, and a Life Member of the VFW National Home for Children. He is also a member of the American Legion, the Benevolent and Protective Order of the Elks.

John and his wife, Mary, reside in Hawthorne, Nevada. They have five grown children and ten grandchildren.

John has the necessary knowledge, experience, education, and most importantly, the dedication to our country, our veterans and our great organization, the Veterans of Foreign Wars.

Please join me in supporting him for the position of Junior Vice Commander-in-Chief of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States. Thank you. (Applause)

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF DeNOYER: Thank you, Chief. I appreciate it. Are there any other nominations for Junior Vice Commander-in-Chief?

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF RICHARD EUBANK: Comrade Commander-in-Chief, it is a great privilege and honor to second the nomination for a great comrade and a great fighter for all veterans. I have seen him grow through the chairs, and he takes each assignment with a heart of gold on each and everything he does. So, it is my privilege again and honor to second the nomination for John Stroud for Junior Vice Commander-in-Chief for the ensuing year 2012-2013.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF DeNOYER: Any further nominations? Are there any further nominations?

The Chair recognizes Microphone No. 3.

COMRADE BRUCE HOLLINGER: Comrade Commander-in-Chief, I am Bruce Hollinger, a delegate from Post 8336 in Nevada. I move that the nominations be closed and the Adjutant General be directed to case one unanimous ballot for John Stroud.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF DeNOYER: Do we have a second?

Microphone No. 3.

COMRADE RAY THOMAS: I am Ray Thomas, a delegate from Post 3632, Tempe, Arizona. I second that motion.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF DeNOYER: We have a motion and a second that nominations be closed and the Adjutant General cast one unanimous ballot for John W. Stroud as Junior Vice Commander-in-Chief. All those in favor will signify by the usual sign of "aye"; those opposed. The "ayes" have it. Thank you.

ADJUTANT GENERAL KENT: Comrade Commander-in-Chief, by the authority and power vested in me, I cast one unanimous ballot for John W. Stroud from the Silver State of Nevada for the high office of Junior Vice Commander-in-Chief for the year 2012-2013.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF DeNOYER: Comrades, you have elected John

W. Stroud as Junior Vice Commander-in-Chief. John, the microphone is yours.

REMARKS – JUNIOR VICE COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF-ELECT STROUD

JUNIOR VICE COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF-ELECT STROUD: Thank you, Chief. Good morning, comrades. I hope you are having as good a time in Nevada as we are enjoying having you here. I hope all of you have won lots of money. I want to thank the delegates to this Convention for the confidence that you have bestowed upon me when you were at your caucuses on Saturday, and you-all cast your favorable support.

I want to thank my friends in the great Western Conference, your support and encouragement, and most of all, your hospitality when I came to visit your Departments. I thank you for your friendship.

I want to thank my comrades in the Department of Nevada, my District and my Post. Mere words cannot convey to you my gratitude for all that you have done in making this historic day possible.

I need to give a shout out to some special people who are watching us on Livestream video. My daughter, Jennifer, a member of the Ladies Auxiliary, and she is a Past Unit President of a Junior Girls Unit. My big brother, Bill, two tours of Vietnam, United States Navy veteran, could not be here today because of family medical issues. And my dear friend, Don Swanson, 87 years old, couldn't travel to be here. He is watching us on Livestream video today. Don is a veteran of the Battle of the Bulge.

I also have some very special guests on the stage with me today. I have got my daughter, Terri, and her husband, Billy, with my two grandchildren, William and Aaron. I have got my son, John, Jr. John is a member of the Men's Auxiliary, and he is a Past Unit Commander of a Sons of the VFW Unit.

I have got my son, Andrew. He is a member of the Men's Auxiliary. Of course, I have a very special guest with me, the Ladies Auxiliary Senior Vice-President of the Department of Nevada, my best friend, the love of my life, and the "Wind Beneath My Wings," my wife, Mary. (Applause)

Commander-in-Chief-Elect Hamilton, Senior Vice Commander-in-Chief-Elect Bill Thien, I pledge to you my dedication and loyalty, and with the important work that we have to do, and we are going to get that work done and dad-gummit we are going to get it done darn well. (Applause)

John Hamilton has had a lifetime commitment to the VFW, and I bet you everybody in this room has made a lifetime commitment to the VFW, and it is a fitting theme for this great year that we have coming before us, because we are the Veterans of Foreign Wars and no one does more for veterans. Thank you and God bless you. (Applause)

SERGEANT-AT-ARMS O'BRIEN: Comrade Junior Vice Commander-in-Chief-Elect, it is an honor for me and the Sergeants to escort you around this hall with you, your family and your friends. Mr. Maestro, the United States Air Force. (Applause)

NOMINATION OF QUARTERMASTER GENERAL

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF DeNOYER: I will now open the nominations for the office of Quartermaster General. Is there any nomination for Quartermaster General?

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF JIM NIER: Commander-in-Chief, Jim Nier, a delegate from Post 8919, Department of Texas.

Comrades, I am honored this morning to place in nomination for the position of Quartermaster General of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, the name of a comrade currently serving in the position. Bob Greene was elected by the National Council of Administration in April 2012, to replace the previous Quartermaster General when he retired at the end of March.

In the short three months that he has served as Quartermaster General, he has earned the respect and trust, and gained the confidence needed to perform the duties of this most important job.

He served in the United States Army from May 1970 to October 1971, with a tour of duty in Vietnam and in the 101st Airborne Light Reference Infantry Unit. He was awarded the Combat Infantryman Badge, the Bronze Star and Air Medal, Vietnam Service Medal, and the Vietnam Campaign Medal.

He is a Legacy Life Member of VFW Post 3797 in Lenexa, Kansas. He earned a degree in Business Administration in 1977 from the University of Missouri, Kansas City, and came to work for the VFW National Headquarters in 1978.

Since his first employment as an Administrative Assistant with the Veterans of Foreign Wars, he has held the positions of Director, Purchasing and Life Membership Director, Finance and Human Resources, Director of Technology Conversion, Chief Information Officer, and for the last seven years Assistant Quartermaster General, until he became Quartermaster General in April.

During his tenure as Assistant Quartermaster General, he managed either directly or indirectly every Department reporting to the Quartermaster General, to include Accounting, Human Resources, Information Technology, Emblem and Supply, VFW Properties, Insurance and Member Dues Processing.

If there was ever a time that we need continuity, stability and leadership experience in the office of the Quartermaster General, it is now.

Bob Greene has that experience at the National level. He has a 34-year record of success from 1978 to the present. He has a record of success that has made the Veterans of Foreign Wars a better organization and its members better served.

He is a man of honor and integrity, who is results-oriented as evidenced by his accomplishments during his many years of exemplary employment with the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States. His personal and professional attributes, which one of the most significant is this unwavering loyalty along with his vision for the future of our organization makes him imminently qualified to be elected to this position.

He and his wife, Theresa, have two beautiful daughters, Melinda Ramos and Melissa Greene, who reside in Kansas.

Comrades, it is with much honor and personal pride that I nominate Comrade Robert B. Greene, Post 7397, Kansas, for the position of Quartermaster General of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States for the ensuing year 2012-2013. Thank you.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF DeNOYER: Thank you, Chief. I appreciate it very much. Are there any other nominations for Quartermaster General?

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF MUELLER: Comrade Commander-in-

Chief, Jim Mueller, Past Commander-in-Chief, and a delegate from Post 5077, O'Fallon, Missouri.

I am pleased and honored to second the nomination of Robert B. Greene, an individual who has served not only his country in Vietnam, in the U.S. Army, but has served this great organization of ours, the Veterans of Foreign Wars with 34 years of VFW financial experience for the betterment of the VFW.

Bob has had the unequalled opportunity to work for and learn from five of the past six Quartermaster Generals in the history of this organization. He has directly or indirectly managed every Department reporting to the Quartermaster General.

Bob has a strong work ethic, is honest and trustworthy. And I trust Bob to guide this great organization of ours, to the best of his ability. We face some tough times ahead of us, and he is the best individual to help us face those challenges in the future.

It is with honor and my pleasure that I second the nomination of Robert B. Greene for the high office of Quartermaster General of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States for the ensuing year of 2012-2013.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF DeNOYER: Thank you very much. A motion is in order for the nominations to be closed and the Adjutant General to cast one unanimous ballot.

I recognize Microphone No. 1.

COMRADE RAY CALORE: Comrade Commander-in-Chief, I am Ray Calore, Commander of the Department of Kansas. I make a motion that nominations close and that the Adjutant General be instructed to cast one unanimous ballot for Bob Greene for the office of Quartermaster General of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF DeNOYER: Thank you very much. We have a motion on the floor. Is there a second?

Microphone No. 1.

COMRADE LYNN ROLF (Department of Kansas): I second that motion.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF DeNOYER: We have a motion and a second that nominations be closed and the Adjutant General cast one unanimous ballot for Robert B. Greene as Quartermaster General. All those in favor will signify by the usual sign of "aye" those opposed. As usual, the "aye" have it. Thank you.

ADJUTANT GENERAL KENT: By the power and authority vested in me, I cast one unanimous ballot for Robert B. Greene from the great state of Kansas for the high office of Quartermaster General of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States for the ensuing year 2012-2013.

REMARKS – QUARTERMASTER GENERAL-ELECT GREENE

QUARTERMASTER GENERAL-ELECT GREENE: Comrade Commander-in-Chief, comrades, sisters and special guests: Thank you for the trust you have placed in me in electing me the Quartermaster General. I will do my best to not let you down. Like the whole American economy, the VFW has suffered through some difficult financial times the last four years, but we have righted the ship and gotten back on track, and now we must stay on track. That will take everyone's best efforts.

I promise I will continue to do everything I can to ensure that the organization has a secure financial future. I want to thank Richard

DeNoyer for the leadership he has provided this year. I also would like to thank Larry Maher for all the help and guidance and support he has provided me. I look forward to working with John Hamilton and the rest of his team, Bill Thien, John Stroud and "Gunner" Kent.

Over the last several years, the National Officers and the National Council had to make some very tough decisions on some important issues. However, we have not seen the last of these tough decisions. We will continue to face them as we set the course for the future of this organization.

To the delegates, again thank you for this opportunity to serve as your Quartermaster General. Thanks also to the Department of Kansas, the Western Conference, and my Post 7397 in Lenexa, Kansas.

If you have questions, comments, complaints or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact me or any member of my staff. Thank you very much.

(Applause)

SERGEANT-AT-ARMS O'BRIEN: Comrade Quartermaster General-Elect, it is an honor for the National Sergeants-at-Arms to escort you and your family around the hall, sir. Mr. Maestro, the United States Army.

NOMINATION OF NATIONAL CHAPLAIN

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF DeNOYER: The nomination for the office of Chaplain is now open. Is there any nomination for Chaplain?

COMRADE PATRICK BOTBYL: Comrade Commander-in-Chief, National Officers, Past Commanders-in-Chief, Delegates here assembled this morning, officers, comrades and friends:

Good morning. My name is Pat Botbyl, Past National Council member from New Jersey, and I am currently a delegate to Post 1593.

I rise this morning to place in nomination for the high office of National Chaplain the name of the Reverend William J. Bleiler, more affectionately known to all of us as Father Bill.

Father Bill has been a Roman Catholic Priest of the Diocese of Camden, New Jersey, for 46 and a half years. He was ordained in Rome, Italy, on January 6, 1996, by his Holiness, Pope Paul VI.

Father Bill has earned his Bachelor of Arts Degrees in Philosophy and Theology, along with a Degree in Humanities, specializing in ancient and foreign languages. He spent six and a half years in Brazil, South America, doing pastoral ministry.

Father Bill gained his eligibility for the Veterans of Foreign Wars while serving in West Germany as a member of the United States Army, NATO Occupation followed by six years in the Army Reserves.

He has been a Charter Member of VFW Post 10886 for over 22 years, and has served the Department of New Jersey as their Chaplain for the last 19 years. He continues to also today serve as the Chaplain for the Eastern States Conference, and was elected as the National Chaplain in 1996-'97.

Father Bill has officially retired by reason of church canon laws at the age of 75, and received the title of Pastor Emeritus. He no longer has the care of the three church communities that he once served, but still continues as the Chaplain in three New Jersey state prisons.

It is again my honor and privilege to place in nomination the name of the Reverend William J. Bleiler for the high office of National Chaplain.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF DeNOYER: Comrades, do we have any other

nominations?

COMRADE OTTO GOLLON: I am Otto Gollon, Department of New Jersey, a delegate from Post 7679, a member of the National Council.

Comrades, I have known Father William Bleiler for so many, many years. I am so very proud to have this opportunity. When I first met Father William Bleiler, he was Father Bill from Cedarville. Then he was Father Bill from Mulligan Hill. He is now Father Bill from Cedarville.

I am so very, very proud to have this opportunity to second the nomination of Father William Bleiler for National Chaplain for the ensuing year 2012-2013.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF DeNOYER: Thank you very much. Are there any other nominations? Any other nominations? Any other nominations?

Hearing none, I recognize Microphone No. 3.

COMRADE WARREN GEORGE: Commander-in-Chief, my name is Warren George, Commander of the Department of New Jersey, a delegate from Post 6590.

I move that nominations for National Chaplain be closed and the Adjutant General cast one unanimous vote for Father Bill Bleiler. Thank you.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF DeNOYER: Thank you. Do we have a second?

Microphone No. 1.

COMRADE ARTHUR TAYLOR: Commander-in-Chief, I am Arthur Taylor, a delegate and Life Member of Post 5479, Dunellen, New Jersey, proudly seconds the motion.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF DeNOYER: Thank you. We have a motion and a second that nominations be closed and the Adjutant General cast one unanimous ballot for the Reverend William Bleiler as Chaplain.

All those in favor will signify by the usual sign of "aye"; those opposed. The "ayes" have it.

ADJUTANT GENERAL KENT: Comrade Commander-in-Chief, by the power and authority vested in me, I cast one unanimous ballot for Father William Bleiler for the high office of Chaplain of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States for the ensuing year 2012-2013.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF DeNOYER: Comrades, you have elected Reverend William Bleiler as Chaplain.

REMARKS – NATIONAL CHAPLAIN-ELECT BLEILER

NATIONAL CHAPLAIN-ELECT BLEILER: Dear Comrades, Ladies of the Auxiliary and Friends: First of all, I thank my sister, Margaret Dockerty, and her daughter, Meg, who flew here from South Jersey to place my cap on my head for this year's National Chaplaincy. She is not my wife, by the way.

Sixteen years ago, my sister, Margaret, did the same when she drove with her husband, Jim, to Louisville, Kentucky, in 1996. Her husband died three years ago, and I had the honor of giving him a military burial.

I thank Pat Botbyl, Past State Commander from the Department of New Jersey, Past Eastern States Chairman, and now working in the National office, who presented my bio for this high office.

I also thank and am very grateful to the Department of New Jersey, the Eastern States Conference, the Big Ten Conference, the Southern and

Western Conferences, and those caucuses where I visited. I thank Otto Gollon, Past All American Department Commander from New Jersey, the present National Representative in New Jersey and Maryland for seconding my nomination.

I am sincerely grateful to the Commander-in-Chief Richard DeNoyer, to the Committee on National Security and Foreign Affairs, POW-MIA Awareness.

I had the pleasure of sitting beside Past Commander-in-Chief Walter Hogan from the State of Wisconsin at that Committee meeting, and it was Walter who began and who signed the charter for a newly-formed Post in Mulligan Hill, Post 10886, the Post number that I have on my new cap.

Comrades and friends, what an honor it is for the second time around to be your National Chaplain. It reminds me of my first experience when Jim Nier from Texas was our National Commander-in-Chief. His motto was "Above and Beyond." So, today I feel I am going above and beyond once again to be concerned about the spiritual and temporal well-being of our veterans and our Ladies Auxiliary of our 54 VFW Departments and our active military serving home and abroad.

Yesterday, I attended the Chaplains' Workshop under the chairmanship of Reverend John Holland, our outgoing National Chaplain. By the way, it was Chaplain Holland who put my little sign on my chest here that my sister, Peggy, had trouble.

So, in that Committee there, that Chaplains' Workshop, we had Past National Chaplains, Department Chaplains, District Chaplains and Post Chaplains. I will pray that our Chaplains will continue to be veterans of stainless integrity, that we will be serving our veterans with dedication and readiness, and that they will have good health and strength to fulfill their duties, my duties and responsibilities.

Finally, on their behalf I pledge our loyalty and support to our new National Commander-in-Chief John Hamilton, and also his team of Vice Commanders, and also the National Council of Administration.

We are also happy as Chaplains to know that "Gunner" Kent will continue on with us and with the National Officers and the staff to assist us with his wisdom and experience.

And finally again, may God bless all of you, may God bless our active military and our veterans worldwide, and may God bless the United States of America. (Applause)

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF DeNOYER: God bless you and good luck to you.

SERGEANT-AT-ARMS O'BRIEN: Comrade National Chaplain-Elect, it is an honor for the National Sergeant-at-Arms to escort you around this hall, with you and your family and your friends, sir. Comrade Maestro, the United States Army.

NOMINATION OF JUDGE ADVOCATE GENERAL

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF DeNOYER: I will now open the nominations for the office of Judge Advocate General. Is there any nomination for Judge Advocate General?

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF THOMAS POULIOT: Comrade Commander-in-Chief, I am Tom Pouliot, delegate from Post 1116, Montana. I rise to nominate a friend and a comrade, David B. Norris, for

the office of National Judge Advocate General for the ensuing year 2012-2013.

David served with the United State Army from 1966 to 1971. During that time he served in Vietnam with the 7th PSYOP Group. In recognition of his service, he received the Vietnam Service Medal, the Presidential Unit Citation with Oak Leaf Cluster, and the Good Conduct Medal with Oak Leaf Cluster.

He joined the Veterans of Foreign Wars in 1968 in Okinawa. He became a Life Member and is currently a Legacy Gold Life Member in Stockton, California, Post 52.

He was an All American Post Commander, an All American District Commander and State Commander of the Department of California in 2007-2008. He has served as our National Chaplain and National Chief of Staff, 2010-2011.

David received his Associate of Arts Degree in Business from the Northwest Missouri State University in 1974. He received his Associate of Arts Degree in Paralegal Studies from the College in 2001, and he passed his paralegal exam in the State of California in 2002.

He worked for Century Law Offices out of Costa Mesa and San Ramon from 2002 to 2006.

He is a member of the Vietnam Veterans of America. He is a paid-up Life Member of the American Legion, and he is a former Exalted Ruler of the PBOE, Tracy, California.

Dave currently resides in Tracy, California, with his wife, Sandy. He has served our organization long and faithfully and will continue to do so as our National Judge Advocate.

It is my personal pleasure to nominate him for the office of National Judge Advocate for the ensuing year 2012-2013.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF DeNOYER: Do we have any further nominations?

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF RICHARD EUBANK: Comrade Commander-in-Chief, I am Richard Eubank, Past Commander-in-Chief, 2010-2011, and a delegate from Post 3965, Springfield, Oregon. Comrades, it gives me great pleasure to second the nomination for David Norris as Judge Advocate General for the year 2012-2013. I wish my best friend a lot of luck.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF DeNOYER: Thank you, Chief. Are there any other nominations? Any other nominations? Are there any other nominations?

Hearing none, I recognize Microphone No. 3.

COMRADE BOBBY PRICE: Comrade Commander-in-Chief, Bobby Price, delegate from the Department of California, VFW Post 2111, Chula Vista, California. I move that the nominations be closed and the Adjutant General be instructed to cast one unanimous ballot for David Norris for Judge Advocate General.

COMRADE BOBBY PRICE, JR. (Post 2111 - Department of California): Comrade Commander-in-Chief, it is my honor to second the motion.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF DeNOYER: We have a motion and a second that nominations be closed and the Adjutant General cast one unanimous ballot for David Norris as Judge Advocate General. All those in favor will signify by the usual sign of "aye"; those opposed. The "ayes" have it. Thank you.

ADJUTANT GENERAL KENT: Comrade Commander-in-Chief, by the power and authority vest in me, I cast one unanimous ballot for David Norris for the high office of Judge Advocate General of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States for the ensuing year 2012-2013.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF DeNOYER: Comrades, you have elected David Norris, Judge Advocate General.

REMARKS – JUDGE ADVOCATE GENERAL-ELECT NORRIS

JUDGE ADVOCATE GENERAL-ELECT NORRIS: I want to thank everybody for their trust and the faith you are putting in me for this coming year, and I will do the best that I can to serve all of you fairly and equally. Thank you.

SERGEANT-AT-ARMS O'BRIEN: Comrade Judge Advocate General-Elect, it is an honor for the National Sergeants to escort you and your family around this hall. Mr. Maestro, it is a Triple Crown, the United States Army.

NOMINATION OF SURGEON GENERAL

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF DeNOYER: I will now open the nominations for the office of Surgeon General. Is there any nomination for Surgeon General?

COMRADE LEON ULFERTS: Comrade Commander-in-Chief, Leon Ulferts, a delegate from Post 3915, Brooklyn Park, Minnesota, the Department Commander for Minnesota. It is a great honor for me this morning to stand and place in nomination for Surgeon General our candidate from the great state of Minnesota.

Dr. Tuorila has earned his eligibility in the Veterans of Foreign Wars by service in Korea, serving on the DMZ, and has been a Life Member of Post 428 in St. Paul, Minnesota, since 1995.

If I were to list this morning all of the degrees, the honors, the citations that he has received, we would be here for a long time. But Dr. Tuorila has earned the degree from a university you probably never heard of. It is called the university of compassion, caring and concern for his veterans. From that university, he has graduated magna cum laude.

Dr. Tuorila has dedicated his life to service to our veterans, who returned from war with the unseen wounds.

It is a great honor for me to place in nomination for the year 2012-2013 the name of Dr. James Tuorila.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF DeNOYER: Thank you. Is there any other nomination for Surgeon General?

COMRADE GARY ANDERSON: Comrade Commander-in-Chief, I am Gary Anderson, Post 6587, a delegate from the Department of Minnesota. It is my privilege to second the nomination of Dr. James Tuorila for the high position of Surgeon General for the Veterans of Foreign Wars for the ensuing year 2012-2013.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF DeNOYER: Any other nominations for Surgeon General? Any other nominations for Surgeon General?

Being none, I recognize Microphone No. 3.

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF JOHN STAUM: Commander-in-Chief, I am John Staum, a delegate from Post 9625, Coon Rapids, Minnesota, Past

Commander-in-Chief 1985-1986.

I move that the nominations be closed and the Adjutant General cast one unanimous ballot for Dr. James Tuorila.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF DeNOYER: Do we have a second?

COMRADE DUANE HERMANSON: Commander-in-Chief, I am Duane Hermanson, Post 4452, from the wonderful state of Minnesota. I second the motion.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF DeNOYER: We have a motion made and seconded that the nominations be closed and the Adjutant General cast one unanimous ballot for James Tuorila as Surgeon General. All those in favor will signify by saying "aye"; all those opposed. The "ayes" have it.

Comrade Adjutant General.

ADJUTANT GENERAL KENT: Comrade Commander-in-Chief, by the power and authority vested in me, I cast one unanimous ballot for Dr. James Tuorila from the great state of Minnesota for the high office of Surgeon General to the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States for the ensuing year 2012-2013.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF DeNOYER: Comrades, you have elected Dr. James R. Tuorila as Surgeon General.

REMARKS – SURGEON GENERAL-ELECT TUORILA

SURGEON GENERAL-ELECT TUORILA: Comrades, Delegates, the Department of Minnesota, the Big Ten, and to my mentor, former Commander-in-Chief John Gwizdak, who would say, "I thank y'all." It is a great honor and a privilege to be here serving on Commander-in-Chief Hamilton's team.

I have dedicated my entire career helping veterans in the health-care industry. I intend to do that again serving on your National Council of Administration, and to keep our team informed of the multiple issues that returning veterans have, the struggles they must overcome, and the struggles that our individual VFW members have in this organization, I intend to promote and encourage throughout my year as your Surgeon General.

I am in the footsteps of "Doc" Bohlman and other famous Surgeon Generals in this organization who have carried the torch. I intend to do the same and do the best job as I can. Thank you. I appreciate it.

SERGEANT-AT-ARMS O'BRIEN: Comrade Surgeon General-Elect, it is an honor to have the National Sergeants escort you around this hall. Mr. Maetro, make it the fourth time, the United States Army.

ANNOUNCEMENT OF THE NEWLY-ELECTED COUNCIL OF ADMINISTRATION MEMBERS

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF DeNOYER: I will now call upon the Adjutant General to announce the newly-elected National Council of Administration members.

ADJUTANT GENERAL KENT: When I call your name off, please rise in front of the Commander-in-Chief:

Alabama - George H. Jones

Alaska - Robert Myles

Arizona - Timothy M. Borland

Arkansas - Michael Nuckolls
California - Bobby R. Price
Colorado - Ronald J. Lattin
Connecticut - Stanley W. Borusiewicz, Jr.
Delaware - John R. Morrow
District of Columbia - Herman C. Salley
Europe - Peter J. Mascetti
Florida - A.E. "Gene" Hall
Georgia - Dean E. Smith
Hawaii - Norbert K. Enos
Idaho - John R. Crotinger
Illinois - Jules D. "Butch" Spindler
Indiana - Richard "Rick" Faulk
Iowa - Darrell Blasberg
Kansas - J.T. Plummer
Kentucky - Brian Duffy
Latin America/Caribbean - Jose A. Claudio
Louisiana - Federico M. "Max" Arends, III
Maine - Thomas R. Lussier
Maryland - Jack P. Lewis
Massachusetts - Roland Gendron
Michigan - John "Jack" Pray
Minnesota - Donald Nix
Mississippi - A. Wayne Aldridge
Missouri - David J. Morgan
Montana - Timothy C. Peters
Nebraska - Dan G. Petersen
Nevada - Herman C. Hagen, Jr.
New Hampshire - David L. Ouellette
New Jersey - Otto A. Gollon, Jr.
New Mexico - Allan "Ski" Kuchinsky
New York - Ronald J. Bush
North Carolina - James Goins
North Dakota - Dale T. Ronning
Ohio - Richard R. Uzl, Jr.
Oklahoma - Harlan "Jay" Bjorgo
Oregon - Bert W. Key
Pacific Areas - Gerald "Jerry" Kraus
Pennsylvania - Robert C. Eiler
Rhode Island - Allen C. Wagonblott, Jr.
South Carolina - Frank M. Fogner
South Dakota - Russel L. Dramstad
Tennessee - John H. Scott
Texas - Dennis Mike Barber
Utah - Brent W. Neilsen
Vermont - Malcolm MacAskill
Virginia - James Martin
Washington - Jerry Herker
West Virginia - Charles E. "Chuck" Haney
Wisconsin - Allen W. Kochenderfer
Wyoming - James Pedersen

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF DeNOYER: Let me, please, call on Commander-in-Chief John Hamilton for his announcement of appointments for the ensuing year.

ANNOUNCEMENT OF APPOINTMENTS

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF-ELECT HAMILTON: My appointments for the term for which I am elected will be as follows:

Adjutant General, Allen F. "Gunner" Kent
National Chief of Staff, William Kirsop, Florida
Inspector General, Carl Kaelin, Kentucky
National Sergeant-at-Arms, Bryan O'Brien, Massachusetts

ADJUTANT GENERAL KENT: A quick point of order. I would just like to make a quick point of order. I know a lot of people think I am hard, but the lady that is hard is right there, and Saturday she has put up with me for 50 years. (Applause)

INSTALLATION OF OFFICERS

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF DeNOYER: We will now proceed with the Installation of Officers.

(Whereupon, Installing Officer Jack Carney assumed the chair at this time.)

INSTALLING OFFICER CARNEY: Comrade Commander-in-Chief, the term for which you and your subordinate officers were elected or appointed has now expired. It is my duty to ascertain the following. Have officers for the ensuing year been duly elected?

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF DeNOYER: They have.

INSTALLING OFFICER CARNEY: Have the books of the Adjutant General and the Quartermaster General been examined and approved by the National Council of Administration?

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF DeNOYER: They have.

INSTALLING OFFICER CARNEY: Does the Adjutant General have on file proof of eligibility for all officers to be installed during this installation?

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF DeNOYER: He does.

INSTALLING OFFICER CARNEY: Are the funds in the hands of the Quartermaster General ready to be turned over to his successor when duly installed?

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF DeNOYER: They are.

INSTALLING OFFICER CARNEY: Have you the Charter in your possession?

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF DeNOYER: I do.

INSTALLING OFFICER CARNEY: You will now surrender the gavel to me. Commander-in-Chief Richard DeNoyer, you have now been relieved of your duties as Commander-in-Chief of this organization. It is proper to remind you that assuming the chair of Past Commander-in-Chief, it will be your duty and privilege to counsel and otherwise assist your successor through the experiences you have gained during your term of office.

You will now station yourself at my right.

Sergeant-at-Arms, you will now present the officers-elect at the altar, as the Assistant Adjutant General reads the list of officers to be installed.

ASSISTANT ADJUTANT GENERAL McNEILL: They are as follows:

Senior Vice Commander-in-Chief – William A. Thien

Junior Vice Commander-in-Chief – John W. Stroud

Adjutant General - Allen “Gunner” Kent

Quartermaster General – Robert B. Greene

Chaplain – Reverend William Bleiler

Judge Advocate General – David B. Norris

Surgeon General – Dr. James Tuorila

Chief of Staff – William Kirsop

Inspector General – Carl Kaelin

Sergeant-at-Arms - Bryan O’Brien

All 54 new Council members, please rise.

Past Commander-in-Chief – Richard L. DeNoyer

SERGEANT-AT-ARMS O’BRIEN: Comrade Installing Officer of the National Convention of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, the officers-elect are in proper position for installation.

INSTALLING OFFICER CARNEY: National Officers-Elect of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, I will now administer to you the Officers’ Obligation. You will raise your right hand, touch the flag of our country with your left hand and repeat after me.

(Whereupon, the following Officers’ Obligation was given at this time: “I do hereby solemnly promise, that I will faithfully discharge, to the best of my ability, the duties of the office to which I have been elected or appointed, according to the By-Laws and Ritual of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States.

“I solemnly promise, that at the close of the term to which I have been elected or appointed, or sooner if so ordered by proper authority, I will surrender immediately to only the duly authorized person or persons, all records, money, or other properties of this organization in my possession or under my control.

“All this I freely promise, upon my honor, as a loyal citizen of our great Republic. So help me God.”)

As you were. Parade rest.

Comrade Chaplain.

NATIONAL CHAPLAIN HOLLAND: Almighty God, our guide and divine protector, give Thy blessings upon these, our comrades, who now become fellow officers. We beseech Thee, O Lord, who are ever present amongst us, grant wisdom unto them, so that in their deliberations they continue to favor Thee, our glorious country and to better our organization.

May Thy strength sustain them, may Thy power preserve them, may Thy hand protect them in the faithful and fruitful performance of their duties. Amen.

INSTALLING OFFICER CARNEY: As you were. National Sergeant-at-Arms, you will now escort the officers to their respective stations, please.

National Officers of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, you now occupy the position of honor to which your comrades have elected you. Learn well the responsibilities entrusted to you so that you may intelligently discharge the duties you are to undertake.

The By-Laws and Ritual of our organization prescribe in detail the duties of your respective offices. By virtue of the confidence placed in you, through your election or your appointment, we assume that you will acquaint yourselves thoroughly with your duties. You may be seated.

Sergeant-at-Arms, you will escort the Commander-in-Chief-Elect to

our station.

Comrade Commander-in-Chief-Elect John E. Hamilton, before administering your Obligation, it is proper to remind you of certain duties.

You will be held personally responsible for the charter of this organization, and at the end of your term of office you will deliver it to the officer appointed to install your successor.

It is your duty to see that all National Officers perform their duties to the best of their ability. You shall keep yourself informed on all proposed legislation which may affect the welfare of potential and actual comrades of this organization. Strive for adoption of only those measures which will be beneficial.

You will be required to devote all of your time to the many duties of your office. You are expected to make a special study of the Congressional Charter, By-Laws and Ritual of this organization so that you may render firm and impartial decisions on important questions referred to you.

As Commander-in-Chief, you will be regarded by your comrades and by the general public as typifying wise and vigorous leadership in the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States. May all your efforts and accomplishments bring credit to your administration and to our organization.

Comrade John E. Hamilton, are you willing and ready to assume your solemn Obligation?

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF-ELECT HAMILTON: I am.

INSTALLING OFFICER CARNEY: You will raise your right hand, touch the flag of our country with your left hand, give your name as I touch your hand and repeat after me.

(Whereupon, Installing Officer Olson administered the Obligation to Commander-in-Chief-Elect Hamilton as follows:

"In the presence of Almighty God and the Officers and Delegates of this Order here assembled, I, John E. Hamilton, solemnly promise that I will faithfully discharge, to the best of my ability, the duties of the office of Commander-in-Chief of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, to which I have been elected, in accordance with the By-Laws and Ritual of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States.

"I solemnly promise, that at the close of the term to which I have been elected or sooner if so ordered by proper authority, I will surrender immediately to only the duly authorized person or persons, the National Charter, all records, money and other properties of this organization in my possession or under my control.

"I do further solemnly promise that I will be fair and impartial in my actions towards all comrades, and I will always strive to promote the best interests of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States. So help me God.")

Comrade Commander-in-Chief, I now place in your possession our Charter. Also, I present you with this gavel, which is the emblem of your authority. Use it firmly, but with discretion.

All National Officers, please stand, stretch forth your right hand and repeat after me:

"Comrade Commander-in-Chief John E. Hamilton, to you I pledge my sincere allegiance."

Comrade Commander-in-Chief, Officers and Delegates of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, I now proclaim the National Officers

duly installed and this organization in working order for the ensuing year.
(Applause)

PRESENTATION TO PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF DeNOYER A BRONZE COVER

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF HAMILTON: What we have here is a bronze cover that we stole. I guess Betty Franke is stealing from the Chief through Theresa. But it is his hat, one of his hats that he actually wore.

It states "Richard L. DeNoyer, Commander-in-Chief, 2011-2012, Service with Pride. Your Team, John E. Hamilton, Senior Vice Commander-in-Chief; William A. Thien, Junior Vice Commander-in-Chief."

Please accept this and thank you for all your hard work, advice and leadership.

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF DeNOYER: I am very pleased and very honored. I will say Betty is very good at stealing hats. Thank you.

ACCEPTANCE SPEECH BY COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF HAMILTON

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF HAMILTON: Thank you very much. Everybody please be seated. Let's see if I can get through this thing without whining or making an idiot out of myself. I am going to do my best.

Thank you, comrades. Thank you for this great honor and trust. I will not let you or this great organization down.

I must first thank my great Department of Florida, District No. 6, and my Post 7909 in Jacksonville for your faith and support.

I also extend my sincere appreciation to Past Commanders-in-Chief Jack Carney, Jim Nier and Larry Rivers for their friendship, their belief in me and their support, and for being willing to take the time to teach me and bring me along. Thank you so much.

I want to especially recognize Past Department of Florida Adjutant/ Quartermasters Bill Kirsop and Benny Bachand. No one has ever had more loyal friends than in those two men.

To my National Council member from Florida, Gene Hall, thank you for your years of faithful service to our great organization and your friendship over the past 30 years. To Past Commanders-in-Chief Richard Eubank and Richard DeNoyer, thank you for your guidance and your leadership. It was an honor to be a part of our "All Marine Team." "Gunner" and Bob Wallace were Marines and with all five of us we have a high school education. That was not part of the secret, but you know how I am.

I want to congratulate new Senior Vice Commander-in-Chief Bill Thien from Indiana and welcome aboard new Junior Vice Commander-in-Chief John Stroud from Nevada. Gentlemen, get ready to roll up your sleeves because we are going to hit the ground running.

I also want to congratulate newly-elected VFW Ladies Auxiliary National President, Leanne Lemley from Iowa. I look forward to working with you to better both our great organizations.

And to my two sons, John, Jr., and my son, Eric, thank you for giving my life meaning. I am very happy Eric could join us today with his girlfriend, Kristen.

Comrades, I belong to many military organizations, and just like you, it's the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States where I choose to

donate my time and energy.

What I am most proud of is our tremendous military support programs, and our outstanding veterans' service and legislative work that we provide daily for America's 22 million veterans, and her 2.3 million service members, and all of their families.

I am extremely proud of our patriotic programs and strong national defense and Homeland Security positions. And I am especially proud of the VFW National Home for Children and the almost 90 years of support that we continue to provide to military and veteran families in need of a helping hand.

Comrades, this is what I brag about when I talk to civilians and potential members about the VFW. I tell them about our founders coming home from their wars to a nation that bore no responsibility to care for their wounds, injuries or illnesses.

I tell them that it was the VFW that played a key role in getting the VA created as well as every significant military and veteran quality of life program passed into law in the 20th and now 21st centuries. And I tell them about the feeling of kinship that every member shares.

That's because our organization gets it, we can talk the talk because we have walked the walk on oceans and lands most people can't find on a map.

Regardless of when, where or which uniform you wore, all of us have served in harm's way. This is a unique experience the surprisingly few can share, which is why the VFW is one of the toughest organizations to join, as it should be.

A similar experience is also shared by our Men's and Ladies Auxiliaries, but it's an experience filled with pride as well as worry for deployed loved ones.

I speak from my own family's history. My grandfather was a Marine, my father was a Marine, and all nine of his brothers also served in the military. That's right, nine brothers; ten of them.

That bond, comrades and sisters, is what makes the VFW so unique and so relevant to today's new generation of warriors, and that's where our focus has to be.

What we have accomplished over the past 113 years on Capitol Hill and in cities and towns everywhere is legendary, but our future existence is 100-percent dependent upon what we do tomorrow.

Let me repeat that, because it's a message I need for you to take back home to your Posts: What the VFW does tomorrow is more important than what we did yesterday.

To attract and retain eligible membership, we have to focus on what it takes for the VFW to be strong, relevant and recognized as the leader in all things military and veteran.

Twenty-two-year-old Afghanistan veteran Chris Gray, from VFW Post 1031 in Springfield, Ohio, said it best last month when he told a local newspaper that the VFW has people you can talk to because we have something big in common. Yes, because we have something big in common.

Comrades, that shared experience bridges all generational gaps. That's why we must be there, not just for the handshake and the pat on the back, but to help them find jobs, to use our own readjustment experiences to help them overcome whatever emotional scars they returned home with,

and to help steer them to a service officer and into the VA system.

This is our sacred duty, comrades. It's a lifetime commitment to pay it forward, because we were all young once when we went off to war, but much older and wiser when we returned. We must pass that knowledge on.

Membership is the lifeblood of this great organization and we are in need of a massive transfusion. We are rapidly losing the World War II generation to age, even though not all of the 16 million who served were eligible to join us. Nationwide, America's greatest generation now numbers less than 1.7 million.

Eligible Korean War vets, too, once numbered almost 1.8 million, but their ranks have now thinned by 60 percent. Our greatest membership target audience is still the Vietnam generation and the wars and conflicts that followed.

Consider these numbers: There are almost 2.8 million Vietnam veterans who are eligible for VFW membership.

There are more than 600,000 Desert Shield and Desert Storm veterans who are eligible for VFW membership.

There are now two million Iraq and Afghanistan veterans who are eligible for VFW membership.

And there are tens of thousands of others from Beirut to Granada, Panama, Somalia, Haiti, the Balkans, Korea and elsewhere, who are also eligible for VFW membership.

So, with all these member eligible veterans, why again did our total membership decline for the twentieth consecutive year? A national survey last year revealed that half of all new veterans don't belong to any veterans organization because no one ever asked them to join. So, why again did only 20 VFW Departments reach 100 percent?

Comrades, we recruit and reinstate more than enough new members to offset our losses to age and illness. Our challenge is to keep annual members from walking out the back door due to disinterest, disagreements or to no follow-up contact. That's a local issue the National Organization cannot fix.

What's also distressing is the number of women we have. They account for 15 percent of the total force, but only one percent of the VFW. That tells me women either aren't being asked to join or they don't feel welcomed when they do. Again, that is a local issue the National Organization cannot fix.

What I do know is that all of us must do much more to recruit all eligible service members and veterans into the VFW, and to urge them to run for leadership positions at the Post, District, Department and National levels.

Comrades, in the not too distant future the last Vietnam veteran will serve as Commander-in-Chief of this great organization. I see that changing of the guard as a positive opportunity for growth, and something definitely worth bragging about.

For far too long the VFW has not properly and rightfully bragged about our accomplishments when we should have. That ends today. Today we begin taking credit when and where it is due.

I hope you have noticed the new branding campaign that came out of the National Headquarters, "No One Does More for Veterans." Those six words are absolutely true, which means we must be in full campaign mode to tell the VFW publicly, not only to potential members, but to everyone

who will listen, and most especially to elected leaders and members of the press.

The reason our voice needs to be heard is because all wars end: Iraq last year and Afghanistan by 2014,

That means veterans issues could once again take a back seat to whatever new national priority becomes the flavor of the day.

We remember firsthand how much the military downsized after World War II, Korea, Vietnam, and Desert Storm. It is guaranteed to happen again, especially in this budget-tightening era. Everything the VFW wants costs money, but everything the VFW wants is for someone else.

That's why I am so damn proud of the VFW Washington Office for carrying the fight to Congress and the White House to protect veterans' benefits and military retirement programs and health care.

I am equally proud of all the Departments and their Legislative Committees for taking this fight directly to their state capitals and inside their city halls. But our fight is far from over to protect the people programs we fought so hard to create, protect and enhance.

Most military folks think Congress or the Defense Department are responsible for increasing their pay or health benefits, or created a new GI Bill or traumatic injury insurance. You tell them, politely, that it was the VFW who led that charge. Without the VFW, it never would have happened. (Applause)

Likewise, the great work by our nationwide force of service officers who have helped hundreds of thousands of veterans to recoup billions in earned compensation and pension for their wounds, injuries and illnesses.

You may not need a service officer or use the VA, but millions of other veterans do, and knowing that our service work is second to none is worth supporting and bragging about.

This is especially important if you reside near one of the 16 military installations and regions around the country where we have BDD service officers assigned to help transitioning military.

Our advocacy on Capitol Hill and troop support and service officer work in 7,300 cities and towns across America are core VFW programs.

And as much as we would like to support all the community requests we receive every year, we all know that the economy just doesn't allow us to support them all. I just ask that you add VFW's core programs to the top of your donation priority list.

A donation to Unmet Needs or the Foundation, or the Washington Office directly supports veterans, service members and their families, and let there be no doubt that having core programs supporting core audiences is why we are founded. We were founded to be a service organization, to do service work for veterans and their families. That's why we are here.

Our forefathers knew that everyone who serves in harm's way is in one big foxhole, which means they inherit a veterans' responsibility, a survivor's responsibility, to pay it forward for the next generation.

That, comrades, is why our six-word slogan "No One Does More for Veterans" is so important. Just don't forget that what you do tomorrow is far more important than what we did yesterday.

Please help us spread the word about what we continue to do for America's military, her veterans and their families. Then ask them to join us. Ask them to join America's greatest veterans organization.

Embracing this new generation is so important that I am appointing

Past Commander-in-Chief Jim Nier to fill a new position to target the entire Student Veterans of America organization. There will be more about that later.

We got to hear from President Obama and Governor Romney this week, because both candidates and their campaigns know that “No One Does More for Veterans” than the VFW. This is the respect we command in Washington, but it is also an obligation we cannot abuse or take lightly.

I am grateful that they took the time to talk to us about our primary concerns, which are the proper care and treatment of veterans, service members and their families, and strong national defense and Homeland Security programs.

I hope you are equally appreciative, because for two straight days the entire country was listening to the next President of the United States talking about military and veterans’ issues at the 113th National Convention of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, and that is something to be damn proud of. They both came here because they know we are a force because we speak for veterans.

Before I conclude, I need to talk about my trip back to Vietnam this past May. It was my first time back since I left duck school. You all know what that means. The VFW has been sending its leadership to Southeast Asia every year since 1991, to Russia since 2004, and now to the People’s Republic of China, all in an effort to help our government better account for our 83,000 missing GIs going back to World War II.

The reason is because we can open doors no one else can because we are not politicians or bureaucrats, we are veterans, and the VFW is respected around the world for our staunch advocacy of this one humanitarian mission that returns all fallen heroes to their families.

I am proud to say that no organization does more for the Full Accounting mission than your VFW, and no organization is more supportive of the 600 military and civilian men and women assigned to the Joint POW-MIA Accounting Command and the Defense POW-MIA Office.

Anyway, long story short, at an MIA recovery site outside Da Nang, I met a retired Vietnamese Army Colonel who just happened to have been a North Vietnamese Lieutenant in the same location and battle where I was. We didn’t speak the same language then and nor do we today, but in a way, we do, because we both served our respective nations in uniform during a time of war. He said you decimated my platoon and we had some surprises for him. His company jumped our little Marine squad and we kicked their behinds.

My war ended in 1970 after being wounded the third time, but the chance encounter brought back old memories of my friend and fellow Marine, Lance Corporal Andy Rankin.

Andy was from St. Peters, Missouri, and was only 19 years old when his war was ended on April 29, 1969, in action in Quang Nam Province. He now lives forever in my heart and on Panel 26 West, Line 79, at the Vietnam War Memorial in Washington.

As I said earlier, we have a veterans’ and survivor’s responsibility to pay it forward for every Andy Rankin and their families from every generation. This is a lifetime commitment that I pledge to do for this great organization, and in return, I ask for your trust, your guidance, and for your support to ensure all America knows that “No One Does More for Veterans!” I have said before, I am pretty blunt sometimes, a little direct, maybe a little rough

around the edges. If I stumble, if I fall, don't kick me in the butt, help me back up, I am one of you.

As I have said before and I will say it again, the highest rank in this organization is comrade; it is not Commander-in-Chief, that is a job title. It is not Post Commander, it is not District Commander, it is not State Commander, those are all titles. The highest rank because you paid the price to be here, the highest always will be and should be comrade, period.

So, let me say to you in closing, I pledge to you my unwavering support until my last breath. I promise you this, we will fight the good fight, we will take it to Congress, we will take it to the statehouses and we will take it to city halls, wherever we have to go with whatever we have to do. This battle we are in, with the budget, this battle on membership, you know the glass, as I said, is not half empty, hell, it is half full. We can win it if we work together.

I can tell you this, my heart of hearts, man, 113 years of proud tradition, 113 years of working for veterans in this country. If you tell the VFW story, if you tell the VFW story, they will join, but you have to take it to them. When they join the organization give them something to do. Make them feel appreciated.

This is not what I wanted to talk about, but I want to tell you this. I used to sit around and listen to some guys talk about the young Vietnam veteran, how he didn't want to join, he wasn't active. Well, guess what, the young veterans today have joined percentage-wise in bigger numbers than World War II, Korea and Vietnam. So, get off this crap, they don't want to join. They are just like you and I were.

I had a World War II guy tell me one time, and I know I have got to shut up and go, say to me, "You know, by God, you young guys don't want to get active." I listened to him talk a little longer, and I said, "What year did you join?" He said, "I joined in 1954." I said, "Hell, you were eligible in 1944. It has been ten years." "Well, I was trying to get a job and feed my family." "Guess what, we are no different."

The Afghanistan and Iraq veterans are no different. So, when they come, welcome them. I will tell you one more quick story that sticks in my craw. I was in Lake City Hospital one time, and this guy walked in. I had not seen him for a year and a half; he was a truck driver. He came to the hospital to visit, he was making a delivery down the road. The first man, I will not mention his name, he got up and said, "Well, Frank, where in the hell have you been? We have been doing all the hospital work for a year and a half and where have you been?" He got back in his truck and left.

You know, the right answer is, "Frank, we are glad you are here." That is what you do. If a guy joins the Post in January and it is now March or April, you have not seen the guy, pick the phone up and call him, and say come down to our Post and come get active and come and visit us. Make the effort, come join and be active, they will come, whatever that percentage is. If you just mail them something in the mail or drop them a note, they get your card and you don't follow up, they are not going to be there. Ninety-nine percent are not coming. So, let's do this together, man. Make a new commitment today, make this the largest veterans organization in America. I know we can do it.

So, let me say in closing, thank you for what you do. God bless you, your families, the VFW and the United States of America.

(Whereupon, the assembly extended a prolonged standing ovation.)

MOTION TO CLOSE CONVENTION

COMRADE KEVIN JONES: Comrade Commander-in-Chief, Kevin Jones, Post 7356, Missouri. Commander-in-Chief, there being no further business to come before this Convention and the officers having been duly elected and installed for the ensuing year, I move that the 113th National Convention of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States be closed sine die.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF HAMILTON: Do we have a second?

COMRADE RICK FRANK (Post 1461 - Illinois): I second the motion.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF HAMILTON: We now have a motion to close the Convention. All those in favor will say "aye"; all those opposed. The "ayes" have it.

Sergeant-at-Arms, you will proceed with the Closing Ceremonies.

CLOSING CEREMONIES

SERGEANT-AT-ARMS O'BRIEN: Yes, sir, Commander-in-Chief.

Captain of the VFW National Honor Guard, advance and retrieve the flag of the United States of America.

Comrade Chaplain Bleiler, the Benediction, please.

BENEDICTION

NATIONAL CHAPLAIN BLEILER: O God, as you reveal yourself, the God of people and nations, we pause at the close of this meeting to acknowledge again your sovereignty over our lives and our country.

We remember our comrades who have departed from this life. We honor them and their families for their loyalty to God and country, for their deeds and friendship.

May they rest in peace and may the virtues and works they stood for be a source of inspiration to us to make our nation and world better. May the grace and peace of God keep our hearts and minds in your name. Amen.

(Whereupon, the colors are retired at this time.)

SERGEANT-AT-ARMS O'BRIEN: Comrade Commander-in-Chief, the Closing Ceremonies for the 113th National Convention have been completed, and your orders have been obeyed, sir.

ADJOURNMENT

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF HAMILTON: Thank you, Sergeant-at-Arms. Just a little housekeeping, on your way out, don't forget your ticket for this afternoon's reception.

The 113th National Convention is closed. We are adjourned sine die.

(Whereupon, the 113th National Convention was duly adjourned sine die at 12:10 o'clock p.m.)

**PROPOSED AMENDMENTS TO NATIONAL BY-LAWS, MANUAL OF
PROCEDURE & RITUAL CONSIDERED BY COMMITTEE ON NATIONAL
BY-LAWS, MANUAL OF PROCEDURE AND RITUAL
113TH NATIONAL CONVENTION, JULY 21–25, 2012
RENO, NEVADA**

B-1 (Recommended by National By-Laws Study Group. Proposed by the Commander-in-Chief)

**ARTICLE I - MEMBERS
Sec. 104 – Admission Fees and Dues.**

Amend Sec. 104 – Admission Fees and Dues., National By-Laws, by replacing the title and the entire section with the following:

“Sec. 104 – Member Dues.

National, Department and Post may establish annual dues in the manner prescribed in these By-Laws. In the event a member surrenders his membership or his membership is terminated in accordance with the National By-Laws, there shall be no refund of annual dues.” (Approved)

B-2 (Proposed by Department of Delaware)

**ARTICLE I - MEMBERS
Sec. 105 – Members in Good Standing.**

Amend Sec. 105 – Members in Good Standing., National By-Laws, by adding the following as a third paragraph:

“Membership rights shall not be extended to include clubrooms, canteens or other facilities available to members as these areas shall at all times be under the control of the Post.” (Rejected)

B-3 (Recommended by National By-Laws Study Group. Proposed by the Commander-in-Chief)

**ARTICLE I – MEMBERS
Sec. 106 – Former Members.**

Amend Sec. 106 – Former Members., National By-Laws, by adding the following at the end of the section:

“Subscription Dues: Effective no later than January 2014, a member whose dues are unpaid on their anniversary date ceases to be a member in good standing and loses all rights and privileges of membership in the Veterans of Foreign Wars.” (Approved)

M-1 (Recommended by National By-Laws Study Group. Proposed by the Commander-in-Chief)

ARTICLE I – MEMBERS
Sec. 106 – Former Members.

Amend Sec. 106 – Former Members., Manual of Procedure, by replacing the entire section with the following:

“The annual dues for a former member must be accepted without reapplication to membership if tendered to his Post within one year of the date on which he became unpaid. A member whose dues remain unpaid for a period of more than one year may be required to reapply for membership in their former Post as prescribed in Section 102 of the National By-Laws.

A former member may apply for membership in any other Post by payment of the current year’s dues and as prescribed in Section 107 of the National By-Laws.” (Approved)

B-4 (Recommended by National By-Laws Study Group. Proposed by the Commander-in-Chief)

ARTICLE I – MEMBERS
Sec. 107 – Transfers.

Amend Sec. 107 – Transfers., National By-Laws, in the first paragraph, by deleting “and a signed Member Declaration.” (Approved)

M-2 (Recommended by National By-Laws Study Group. Proposed by the Commander-in-Chief)

ARTICLE I – MEMBERS
Sec. 107 – Transfers.

Amend Sec. 107 – Transfers., Manual of Procedure, under item 2), by deleting “a” and replacing with “the” and add “as stated below” at the end of the sentence.

Amend under “**Member Declaration**”, in the first sentence, by deleting “and/or reinstate”. (Approved)

B-5 (Recommended by National By-Laws Study Group. Proposed by the Commander-in-Chief)

ARTICLE II – POSTS
Sec. 203 – Regular, Special and Committee Meetings; Quorum; Authorized Attendees.

Amend Sec. 203 – Regular, Special and Committee Meetings; Quorum; Authorized Attendees., National By-Laws, under “**Regular Meetings.**”, by adding the following after the first sentence:

“Failure to comply can result in immediate revocation of the Post Charter notwithstanding the provisions of Section 211 of the Manual of Procedure.” (Approved)

B-6 (Recommended by National By-Laws Study Group. Proposed by the Commander-in-Chief)

ARTICLE II – POSTS

Sec. 205

Amend Sec. 205, National By-Laws, by inserting the following from current Section 206 as modified:

“Sec. 205 – Change of Location, Meeting Place, Day or Time.

A Post may change its chartered location, meeting place, meeting day or time as prescribed in Section 205 of the Manual of Procedure.”
(Approved)

M-3 (Recommended by National By-Laws Study Group. Proposed by the Commander-in-Chief)

ARTICLE II – POSTS

Sec. 205

Amend Sec. 205, Manual of Procedure, by inserting the following from current Section 206:

“Sec. 205 - Change of Location, Meeting Place, Day or Time.

A Post may, after at least thirty (30) days written notice to the Department Commander and members of the Post, change its chartered location upon a two-thirds (2/3) vote of the members present at a regular or special meeting. Upon recommendation of the Department Commander, an amended Charter will be issued by the Commander-in-Chief. No change may be effected until an amended Charter is issued.

At such time as the Post changes its location from one community to another, any portion of the Post name that relates to the geographical area or community from which it has relocated shall be deleted from its name.

A Post may, after at least fourteen (14) days written notice to the Department Commander and members of the Post, change its meeting place, appointed day or time upon a majority vote of the members present at a regular or special meeting.” (Approved)

B-7 (Recommended by National By-Laws Study Group. Proposed by the Commander-in-Chief)

ARTICLE II – POSTS

Sec. 206 – Change of Location, Meeting Place, Day or Time.

Amend Sec. 206 - Change of Location, Meeting Place, Day or Time., National By-Laws, by inserting the following from current Section 104 as modified:

“Sec. 206 - Post Admission Fees and Dues.

Each Post shall determine its annual dues and establish an admission fee to be charged its new members as prescribed in the Department

and National By-Laws. At least monthly, each Post shall transmit all dues collected as prescribed in the Department and National By-Laws. Admission fees and dues collected for the Department and National Organization are, and become, the property of the respective Department or the National Organization upon receipt by the Post.” (Approved)

M-4 (Recommended by National By-Laws Study Group. Proposed by the Commander-in-Chief)

ARTICLE II – POSTS

Sec. 206 – Change of Location, Meeting Place, Day or Time.

Amend Sec. 206 - Change of Location, Meeting Place, Day or Time., Manual of Procedure, by replacing the title and section with the following:

“Sec. 206 – Post Admission Fees and Dues. (See Section 206 By-Laws)” (Approved)

M-5 (Proposed by Department of Texas)

ARTICLE II - POSTS

Sec. 208 – Change of Name.

Amend Sec. 208 – Change of Name., Manual of Procedure, by replacing the second paragraph with the following:

“A Post shall not change its name to the name of a living person, other than a living Medal of Honor recipient, nor adopt a name already adopted by another Post in good standing in the Department.” (Rejected)

M-6 (Recommended by National By-Laws Study Group. Proposed by the Commander-in-Chief)

ARTICLE II – POSTS

Sec. 209 – Consolidation of Posts.

Amend Sec. 209 – Consolidation of Posts., Manual of Procedure, by adding the following as the last paragraph in the section:

“Notwithstanding the provisions above, the Department Commander may recommend consolidation to the Commander-in-Chief as circumstances dictate.” (Approved)

M-7 (Recommended by National By-Laws Study Group. Proposed by the Commander-in-Chief)

ARTICLE II – POSTS

Sec. 211 – Suspension and Revocation of Charter.

Amend Sec. 211 - Suspension and Revocation of Charter., Manual of Procedure, under no. **“1. Actions by the Commander-in-Chief – Suspension.”**, by replacing with the following:

“The Commander-in-Chief may suspend a post charter in accordance with the procedures herein set forth and issue a Special Order directing the Department Commander to suspend a Post Charter.”

Amend no. **“2. Actions by the Commander-in-Chief – Revocation.”**, b., by replacing with the following:

“b. Unless the Post Commander, upon a motion duly passed at any regular or special meeting called for such purpose, notifies the Commander-in-Chief in writing by certified mail, return receipt requested, within thirty (30) days of receipt of the revocation notice that the Post desires a hearing, the revocation of the Charter shall be effected.”

Amend no. **“3. Actions by the Department Commander - Suspension.”**, e., by deleting “shall revoke or” and replacing with “may”.

Amend no. **“4. Actions by the Department Commander – Revocation.”**, by adding “consolidation or” after “recommend”. (Approved)

B-8 (Recommended by National By-Laws Study Group. Proposed by the Commander-in-Chief)

ARTICLE II – POSTS

Sec. 216 – Elected and Appointed Officers; Chairmen and Committees.

Amend Sec. 216 – Elected and Appointed Officers; Chairmen and Committees., National By-Laws, by replacing with the following:

“(a) The elected officers of each Post will consist of a Commander, Senior Vice Commander, Junior Vice Commander, Quartermaster and three (3) Trustees.

(b) The Post Commander shall appoint an Adjutant, Officer of the Day, Service Officer and may appoint a Chaplain, Judge Advocate, Surgeon and two (2) additional Trustees as prescribed in Section 216 in the Manual of Procedure.”

(Rejected)

M-8 (Recommended by National By-Laws Study Group. Proposed by the Commander-in-Chief)

ARTICLE II – POSTS

Sec. 216 – Elected and Appointed Officers; Chairmen and Committees.

Amend Sec. 216 – Elected and Appointed Officers; Chairmen and Committees., Manual of Procedure, in the first sentence, by removing “Guard”. (Approved)

M-9 (Proposed by Department of Pennsylvania)

ARTICLE II - POSTS

Sec. 218 – Officers and Chairmen, Duties and Obligations.

Amend Sec. 218 – Officers and Chairmen, Duties and Obligations., Manual of Procedure, under **(a) Officers.** (7) **Chaplain.**, by deleting “of him”. (Rejected)

M-10 (Recommended by National By-Laws Study Group. Proposed by the Commander-in-Chief)

ARTICLE II – POSTS

Sec. 218 – Officers and Chairmen, Duties and Obligations.

Amend Sec. 218 – Officers and Chairmen, Duties and Obligations., Manual of Procedure, under **(a) Officers.** (1) **Commander.**, j., by deleting the last sentence.

Amend (a)(5) **Quartermaster.**, h., by adjusting and replacing with the following:

“h. Reconcile and verify all transactions listed on all bank statements to assure the accuracy of post records. The books and records of the Quartermaster shall be maintained in a legible and uniform format. Record keeping by electronic means may be used, provided a back-up is maintained. Books and records shall be available for inspection by authorized officers and Post members at all reasonable times. Unless specifically authorized by the Post to remove such books and records from its facilities, they will be kept at the Post facilities.”

Amend (a)(5) i., by removing the first two words.

Amend (a)(5) l., by adding “or regulations.” at the end of the sentence.

Amend (a)(6) **Adjutant.**, c., by replacing with the following:

“c. Maintain the books and records in a legible and uniform format. Record keeping by electronic means may be used, provided a back-up is maintained. Books and records shall be available for inspection by authorized officers and Post members at all reasonable times. Unless specifically authorized by the Post to remove such books and records from its facilities, they will be kept at the Post facilities.”

Amend (a)(6) d., no. 3., by deleting “or” after “(if applicable)” and replacing with “and”.

Amend (a) nos. (7), (8), (9) and (10), by adding “If appointed,” at the beginning of each sentence.

Amend (a)(11) **Trustees.**, by replacing the first paragraph with the following:

“Trustees shall not be eligible to serve as chairman of a committee

whose books, records and accounts are audited by the Trustees. Among the duties of the Post Trustees, they shall:".

Amend (a)(11) b., by replacing with the following:

"b. Within thirty (30) days from the end of each quarter, properly audit the books and records of the Post Quartermaster, Post Adjutant, and any activity, clubroom, holding company or unit sponsored, conducted or operated by, for or on behalf of the Post and submit a Post Trustee's Report of Audit to the Department Quartermaster for referral to the Department Inspector." (Approved)

M-11 (Recommended by National By-Laws Study Group. Proposed by the Commander-in-Chief)

ARTICLE II – POSTS

Sec. 220 – Vacancies and Removal of Elective Officers or Committee Members.

Amend Sec. 220 – Vacancies and Removal of Elective Officers or Committee Members., Manual of Procedure, under "**Vacancies.**", by replacing the entire section with the following:

"Vacancies. In the event of a vacancy in the office of Commander or Commander-elect, the Senior Vice Commander or Senior Vice Commander-elect may choose to succeed to the title and duties of such office and the Junior Vice Commander or Junior Vice Commander-elect, may choose to succeed to the title and duties of the Senior Vice Commander. Likewise, in the event of a vacancy in the office of Senior Vice Commander or Senior Vice Commander-elect, the Junior Vice Commander or Junior Vice Commander-elect, may choose to succeed to the title and duties of said office. If the Senior Vice Commander does not move to the position of Commander, then the Junior Vice Commander or Junior Vice Commander-elect may choose to succeed to the title of Commander. If neither the Senior nor Junior Vice Commander succeed as described herein, then the Senior Vice Commander shall assume the duties of the Commander until the election of the new Commander. Should the vacancy occur in the office of Post Quartermaster, the Post Commander may appoint a Pro Tempore Quartermaster to carry out the duties incident to that office. The appointment shall in no instance exceed more than sixty (60) days and will expire upon the election of a Post Quartermaster.

Removal. A Post may, upon motion duly passed at any meeting, propose the removal of an officer or committee member at the next stated meeting or special meeting called for such purpose. The member holding such office and the Department Commander shall be notified at least seven (7) days prior to the meeting that will propose the removal by certified or registered mail addressed to the member's last known address stating the reasons for the proposed action.

The Post, at the next stated meeting or special meeting, may by two-thirds (2/3) vote of the members present declare vacant the position of any elective officer or elected chairman or committee member who may have:

1. Absented himself from two (2) consecutive meetings or who has
2. Failed to fulfill the duties of office specified in Sections 218 of the By-Laws and the Manual of Procedure.

Notification of Removal. Such actions taken by the Post Commander or Department Commander shall list specific By-Law violations for the removal and shall be in the form of a Special Order delivered personally or by certified or registered mail to the removed officer's last known address. The special order shall advise the member of his rights to appeal under Section 109 of these By-Laws." (Rejected)

B-9 (Proposed by Department of Washington)

ARTICLE IV - DISTRICTS

Sec. 403 – Regular, Special and Committee Meetings; Convention; Quorum; Authorized Attendees.

Amend Sec. 403 – Regular, Special and Committee Meetings; Convention; Quorum; Authorized Attendees., National By-Laws, under **Convention.**, by deleting "forty-five (45)" and replacing with "seventy-five (75)". (Rejected)

B-10 (Recommended by National By-Laws Study Group. Proposed by the Commander-in-Chief)

ARTICLE IV – DISTRICTS

Sec. 403 – Regular, Special and Committee Meetings; Convention; Quorum; Authorized Attendees.

Amend Sec. 403 - Regular, Special and Committee Meetings; Convention; Quorum; Authorized Attendees., National By-Laws, under **Convention.**, by deleting "forty-five (45)" and replacing with "seventy-five (75)". (Approved)

B-11 (Recommended by National By-Laws Study Group. Proposed by the Commander-in-Chief)

ARTICLE IV – DISTRICTS

Sec. 416 – Elected and Appointed Officers; Chairmen and Committees.

Amend Sec. 416 – Elected and Appointed Officers; Chairmen and Committees., National By-Laws, by replacing **(a)** and **(b)** with the following:

(a) The elected officers of each District shall consist of a Commander, Senior Vice Commander, Junior Vice Commander, Quartermaster and three (3) Trustees.

(b) The District Commander will appoint an Adjutant, Chief of Staff, Service Officer and Inspector and may appoint a Chaplain, Judge Advocate and Surgeon as prescribed in Section 416 in the Manual of Procedure." (Rejected)

M-12 (Proposed by Department of Pennsylvania)

ARTICLE IV - DISTRICTS

Sec. 418 – Officers: Duties and Obligations.

Amend Sec. 418 – Officers: Duties and Obligations., Manual of Procedure, under (a) **Officers.** (8) **Chaplain;** by replacing the second sentence with the following:

“The Chaplain shall perform such other duties as may be incident to the office or as may from time to time be required by the laws and usages of this organization or lawful orders from proper authority.” (Rejected)

M-13 (Recommended by National By-Laws Study Group. Proposed by the Commander-in-Chief)

ARTICLE IV – DISTRICTS

Sec. 418 – Officers: Duties and Obligations.

Amend Sec. 418 – Officers: Duties and Obligations., Manual of Procedure, under (a) **Officers.** (1) **Commander.**, a., by replacing with the following:

“a. Preside at all meetings of the District conducting such convention and meetings in accordance with Article X and other applicable parliamentary rules and procedures.” (Approved)

M-14 (Recommended by National By-Laws Study Group. Proposed by the Commander-in-Chief)

ARTICLE IV – DISTRICTS

Sec. 420 – Vacancies and Removal of Elective Officers or Committee Members.

Amend Sec. 420 – Vacancies and Removal of Elective Officers or Committee Members., Manual of Procedure, under “**Vacancies.**”, by replacing the first paragraph with the following:

“**Vacancies.** In the event of a vacancy in the office of Commander or Commander-elect, the Senior Vice Commander or Senior Vice Commander-elect, if they choose, will succeed to the title and duties of such office and the Junior Vice Commander or Junior Vice Commander-elect, if they choose, will succeed to the title and duties of the Senior Vice Commander. Likewise, in the event of a vacancy in the office of Senior Vice Commander or Senior Vice Commander-elect, the Junior Vice Commander or Junior Vice Commander-elect, if they choose, will succeed to the title and duties of said office. If the Senior Vice Commander does not move to the position of Commander, then the Junior Vice Commander or Junior Vice Commander-elect, if they choose, will succeed to the title of Commander. If neither the Senior nor Junior Vice Commander succeed as described herein, then the Senior Vice Commander shall assume the duties of the Commander until the election of the new Commander.” (Rejected)

B-12 (Recommended by National By-Laws Study Group. Proposed by the Commander-in-Chief)

ARTICLE V – DEPARTMENTS

Sec. 513 – Arrearages, Deficiencies and Omissions.

Amend Sec. 513 – Arrearages, Deficiencies and Omissions., National By-Laws, by replacing the first sentence in the first paragraph with the following:

“The Commander of a Department in arrears for National dues payments, Buddy Poppy money, supply money or other financial obligations or failing to have the office of Quartermaster bonded, or failing to submit annual budgets, IRS Form 990 or Department Election Reports will be deprived of all representation at the National Convention.”
(Approved)

M-15 (Proposed by Department of Pennsylvania)

ARTICLE V - DEPARTMENTS

Sec. 518 – Officers: Duties and Obligations.

Amend Sec. 518 – Officers: Duties and Obligations., Manual of Procedure, under (a) **Officers.** (6) **Chaplain.**, by replacing the second sentence with the following:

“The Chaplain shall perform such other duties as may be usually incident to the office or as may from time to time be required by the laws and usages of the organization or lawful orders from proper authority.”
(Rejected)

M-16 (Recommended by National By-Laws Study Group. Proposed by the Commander-in-Chief)

ARTICLE V – DEPARTMENTS

Sec. 518 – Officers: Duties and Obligations.

Amend Sec. 518 – Officers: Duties and Obligations., Manual of Procedure, under (a) **Officers.**, (4) **Quartermaster.**, k. **Budget.**, by deleting “within 15 days” at the end of the last sentence and replacing with “by August 1”. (Approved)

M-17 (Recommended by National By-Laws Study Group. Proposed by the Commander-in-Chief)

ARTICLE V – DEPARTMENTS

Sec. 520 – Vacancies and Removal of Elective Officers or Committee Members.

Amend Sec. 520 – Vacancies and Removal of Elective Officers or Committee Members., Manual of Procedure, under “**Vacancies.**”, by removing “shall” and replacing with “will” in all instances in the first two paragraphs and in the first sentence of the third paragraph. (Approved)

B-13 (Proposed by Department of Vermont)

ARTICLE V - DEPARTMENTS

Sec. 522 – Council of Administration – Composition, Powers and Duties.

Amend Sec. 522 – Council of Administration – Composition, Powers and Duties., National By-Laws, under (a) **Composition.**, by replacing the last two sentences with the following:

“Other Departments having a membership of 9,500 or less may adopt By-Laws to include up to 10 past Department Commanders as voting members of the Department Council of Administration, on the condition that the By-Laws are adopted by the Department Convention so provide.” (Rejected)

B-14 (Recommended by National By-Laws Study Group. Proposed by the Commander-in-Chief)

ARTICLE VI – NATIONAL

Sec. 603 – Convention; Quorum; Authorized Attendees.

Amend Sec. 603 – Convention; Quorum; Authorized Attendees., National By-Laws, in the first paragraph, by deleting the first sentence and the first three words in the second sentence. (Approved)

B-15 (Proposed by Department of Pennsylvania)

ARTICLE VI - NATIONAL

Sec. 618 – Officers: Duties and Obligations.

Amend Sec. 618 – Officers: Duties and Obligations., National By-Laws, under (h) **Chaplain.**, by replacing the second and third sentences with the following:

“The Chaplain will be familiar with the Ritual and shall conduct the annual memorial service held in connection with the National Convention. The Chaplain shall perform such other duties as may be incident to the office or as may from time to time be required by the laws and usages of the organization or lawful orders from proper authority.” (Rejected)

B-16 (Proposed by the Commander-in-Chief)

ARTICLE VI - NATIONAL

Sec. 618 – Officers: Duties and Obligations.

Amend Sec. 618 – Officers: Duties and Obligations., National By-Laws, under (d) **Quartermaster General.**, (1), by deleting “Immediately” and adding “may” in front of “appoint”. (Approved)

B-17 (Recommended by National By-Laws Study Group. Proposed by the Commander-in-Chief)

ARTICLE VI – NATIONAL

**Sec. 622 – National Council of Administration-Composition,
Powers and Duties.**

Amend Sec. 622 – National Council of Administration-Composition, Powers and Duties., National By-Laws, under (b) **Powers and Duties:** (4) **Disposition of Property;** in the first sentence, by removing “taken over” and replacing with “accrued”.

Amend (b)(5) **Manual of Procedure;** by adding “as prescribed in Section 1401 of the Manual of Procedure” at the end of the last sentence. (Approved)

B-18 (Recommended by National By-Laws Study Group. Proposed by the Commander-in-Chief)

ARTICLE VI – NATIONAL

Sec. 623 – National Council of Administration, Department Members-Election, Vacancies and Removal.

Amend Sec. 623 – National Council of Administration, Department Members–Election, Vacancies and Removal., National By-Laws, under “**Election**”, by deleting “Following the completion of the transitional rule in Section 624,” in the first sentence. (Approved)

B-19 (Recommended by National By-Laws Study Group. Proposed by the Commander-in-Chief)

ARTICLE VI – NATIONAL

Sec. 624 – Transitional Rule.

Amend Sec. 624 – Transitional Rule., National By-Laws, by deleting the entire section. (Approved)

B-20 (Recommended by National By-Laws Study Group. Proposed by the Commander-in-Chief)

ARTICLE VII – MISCELLANEOUS PROVISIONS

Sec. 718

Amend Sec. 718, National By-Laws, by inserting the following:

“Sec. 718 – Audits/Financial Review.

Effective August 1, 2013, any Post, District or Department, or any unit thereof, as described in Section 709 of these By-Laws, whose cash assets are in excess of \$75,000 and gross receipts are equal to or exceed \$50,000 in any administrative year shall be required to conduct a financial review.” (Rejected)

M-18 (Recommended by National By-Laws Study Group. Proposed by the Commander-in-Chief)

ARTICLE IX – DISCIPLINE
Sec. 903 – Procedure for Disciplinary Actions.

Amend Sec. 903 – Procedure for Disciplinary Actions., Manual of Procedure, under (g) **Procedure Where Mediation Requested.**, at the end of the first sentence, by adding “unless an agreed upon decision is accomplished during mediation.” At the end of the second sentence, add “accused’s” before “request”.

Amend (h) **Procedure Where No Hearing is Requested.**, by replacing with the following:

“(h) **Procedure Where A Hearing is Not Requested.** (See Section 903 By-Laws)”

Amend (j) **Procedure at Hearing.**, no. 2., in the second sentence, by deleting “shall be required to plead” and replacing with “will plea”.

Amend (j), no. 3., in the first sentence, by replacing the first “and” with “or”.

Amend (j), no. 5., by adding “followed by the defense” at the end of the first sentence and deleting the second sentence.

Amend (j), no. 7., by replacing the first sentence with the following: “Includes items presented in the form of exhibits which show or demonstrate factual matters.”

Combining the fourth and fifth paragraphs with the following:

“Hearsay evidence consists of testimony based upon the out-of-court statements of persons or documents, i.e., what some other person told the witness or upon something seen by the witness in a document that is not presented. Hearsay testimony is given less credence because there may be no opportunity to cross-examine the person who actually heard or saw the incident or wrote the document. While hearsay evidence can be considered by the Disciplinary Hearing Panel because of a belief that a sufficiently trustworthy basis exists for considering the evidence, it should be considered with an appreciation that the evidence is less credible. Hearsay evidence may be fully considered without that limitation if the witness is testifying concerning something the accused has said or the evidence consists of reinforcing documents or letters prepared or signed by the accused.”

Amend (j), No. 10., by replacing the second sentence with the following:

“In the event the accused or his counsel was not present at the hearing, a copy of the Findings and Sentence (Form DA-4) shall be mailed to the last known address within seven days after the hearing.” (Approved)

B-21 (Recommended by National By-Laws Study Group. Proposed by

the Commander-in-Chief)

ARTICLE XIV – AMENDMENTS

Sec. 1401 – Amendments.

Amend Sec. 1401 – Amendments., National By-Laws, under “**By-Laws:**”, in the fourth paragraph, by removing “members” and replacing with “delegates”.

Amend the last paragraph under “**By-Laws:**”, by adding “..., unless specifically stated otherwise in the amendment.” at the end of the sentence. (Approved)

M-19 (Recommended by National By-Laws Study Group. Proposed by the Commander-in-Chief)

ARTICLE XIV – AMENDMENTS

Sec. 1401 – Amendments.

Amend Sec. 1401 – Amendments., Manual of Procedure, in the first paragraph, by replacing Section “618” with “622”. (Approved)

R-1 (Pages 3-4) (Proposed by Department of Oregon, Department of Arizona and the Department of Texas)

RITUAL

COMMEMORATIVE TRIBUTES - THE DATES.

Amend Chapter Title – Commemorative Tributes – The Dates, Ritual, by adding the following dates in chronological sequence:

“February 28 - Liberation of Kuwait – Operation Desert Storm 1991.

March 24 – Start of Kosovo Campaign 1999.

March 31 – End of Operation Restore Hope – Somalia 1995.

August 31 – End of Operation Iraqi Freedom 2010.

October 9 – Start of Operation Enduring Freedom – Afghanistan 2001.

October 18 – Recognition of Women in Military Service.” (Approved)

R-2 (Pages 106-107) (Proposed by Department of Oregon)

RITUAL

MEMORIAL SERVICES – Ceremony For Draping Charter.

Amend Chapter Title – Memorial Services – Ceremony For Draping Charter, Ritual, by adding the following at the end of the section:

“After the 30 days, an Undraping of the Charter ceremony be performed:

After motion from floor, or Commander requests ceremony:

Commander: Officer of the Day, you will prepare to undrape the charter.
(Officer of the Day proceeds to the altar and salutes Commander)

Commander: (Raps gavel twice) Members rise and face charter at attention.

Commander: Officer of the Day, you will now undrape our charter which was draped last month for Comrade _____

(Officer of the Day proceeds to undrape charter)

Commander: Comrades, Salute—Two." (Approved)

**RESOLUTIONS CONSIDERED BY COMMITTEE ON FINANCE
AND INTERNAL ORGANIZATION AT THE
113TH NATIONAL CONVENTION, RENO, NEVADA**

Resolution No. 201 (Submitted by Department of Oregon)

NATIONAL JOINT COMMITTEE TO IMPLEMENT THE
REORGANIZATION OF THE MEMBERSHIP PROGRAM FOR THE
VETERANS OF FOREIGN WARS OF THE UNITED STATES

WHEREAS, the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States is a grassroots, membership driven organization; and

WHEREAS, the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States recognizes the reality concerning the organizations inability to achieve Membership Program goals for 20 consecutive years; and

WHEREAS, the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States Membership Program has not effectively fostered any sustained, meaningful success at National Headquarters, the Departments, or the Posts; and

WHEREAS, it is no longer in the best interests of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States to promote a failed program, that is without question, particularly crucial to the future success of this great organization; now, therefore

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that the current Membership Program be abolished, the Commander-in-Chief sponsor a By- Law amendment to delete paragraph (a)(13) from Article VI, Section 618, and relinquish all authority pertaining thereto; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that the Commander-in-Chief create a joint committee of National, Department, and Post Officers to develop a New Membership Program, and facilitate the creation of the VFW Marketing Department, which will report directly to the Adjutant General. This department will be solely responsible for the implementation, and day to day management of the New Membership Program; to be voted on by the members of the National Convention no later than the close of the 114th National Convention, and put into action at the beginning of the 2013-2014 membership year. (Rejected)

Resolution No. 202 (Submitted by Department of West Virginia)

NATIONAL JOINT COMMITTEE TO IMPLEMENT THE
REORGANIZATION OF THE MEMBERSHIP PROGRAM FOR THE
VETERANS OF FOREIGN WARS OF THE UNITED STATES

WHEREAS, the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States is a grassroots, membership driven organization; and

WHEREAS, the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States recognizes the reality concerning the organizations inability to achieve Membership Program goals for 20 consecutive years; and

WHEREAS, the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States Membership Program has not effectively fostered any sustained, meaningful success at National Headquarters, the Departments, or the Posts; and

WHEREAS, it is no longer in the best interests of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States to promote a failed program, that is without question, particularly crucial to the future success of this great organization; now, therefore

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that the current Membership Program be abolished, the Commander-in-Chief sponsor a By-Law amendment to delete paragraph (a)(13) from Article VI, Section 618, and relinquish all authority pertaining thereto; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that the Commander-in-Chief create a joint committee of National, Department, and Post Officers to develop a New Membership Program, and facilitate the creation of the VFW Marketing Department, which will report directly to the Adjutant General. This department will be solely responsible for the implementation, and day to day management of the New Membership Program; to be voted on by the members of the National Convention no later than the close of the 114th National Convention, and put into action at the beginning of the 2013-2014 membership year. (Rejected)

Resolution No. 203 (Submitted by Department of West Virginia)

“THE AUXILIARY” OF THE VETERANS OF FOREIGN WARS OF THE UNITED STATES

WHEREAS, the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States honors the service and sacrifice of all military service members, regardless of race, ethnicity, religion or gender; and

WHEREAS, the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States recognizes the sacrifice made by the dependents of our military service members, regardless of race, ethnicity, religion or gender; and

WHEREAS, the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States appreciates the significant contribution our Ladies and Men’s Auxiliaries make to our veterans and their families; and

WHEREAS, two nationally recognized, but separate auxiliaries has divided our dependents with questions of disparate treatment, and requires significant duplication of administrative effort, resources, and manpower; and

WHEREAS, the Ladies Auxiliary to the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States have resolved to change their eligibility requirements to include males, and change the organizations name to become "The Auxiliary to the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States"; now, therefore

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that the Commander-in-Chief sponsor a By-Law amendment that will abolish Article XIII, the Men's Auxiliary, and include agreed upon eligibility changes to Article XI, Section 1102, to be voted on by the members of the National Convention no later than the close of the 117th National Convention. (Rejected)

Resolution No. 204 (Submitted by Department of Florida)

MEN'S AUXILIARY

WHEREAS, the Men's Auxiliary to the Veterans of Foreign Wars is an association of the eligible members chartered by the Department to which it is assigned per article XIII Men's Auxiliary be allowed to form Districts and Departments; and

WHEREAS, those Departments who wish to charter a Men's Auxiliary be allowed to form Districts in their Department. Such Districts shall align with the Department District boundaries and numbers. No Auxiliary to the District of the Veterans of Foreign Wars shall be formed unless approved at a regular or special meeting and approved by 2/3 of the members of the Post in the District; and

WHEREAS, after the formation of Districts the formation of a Men's Auxiliary Department may be formed with the approval of 2/3 votes of the Delegates assembled at an annual Department Convention; now, therefore

BE IT RESOLVED, the Manual of Procedure mirror the Ladies Auxiliary Article XI Sec. 1101-1104; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, any department that does not currently have a Men's Auxiliary will not be required to form them. (Rejected)

RESOLUTIONS CONSIDERED BY COMMITTEE ON GENERAL RESOLUTIONS

Resolution No. 301 (Submitted by Department of South Dakota)

AUTHORIZATION OF AN ATOMIC-VETERAN-MEDAL FOR ALL VETERANS WHO WERE EXPOSED TO ATOMIC BLASTS

WHEREAS, there are approximately 190,000 surviving United States military veterans who, in the line of duty, were exposed to ionizing radiation particles dispersed by nuclear weapons tests conducted by the

United States government while proudly serving in the Armed Forces of the United States; and

WHEREAS, many of these Atomic-Veterans have since experienced and continue to experience many radiation-exposure related health issues as a direct consequence of the faithful performance of their duties in the service of the United States of America; and

WHEREAS, to date the United States government has chosen not to honor many of the medical care claims resulting from being wounded in the line of duty by atomic radiation from nuclear weapons tests; and

WHEREAS, both the British and the Russian have chosen to honor their military personnel exposed in the line of duty to nuclear radiation particles with a commemorative medal, but the United States government has to date chosen not to so honor its Atomic-Veterans; and

WHEREAS, there is no moral distinction between being wounded by the bullet of an enemy on the battlefield, and being wounded by exposure to atomic radiation fallout in the faithful performance of military service for one's country; and

WHEREAS, these Atomic-Veterans have an average age of 84 years, and their ability to accept, display and appreciate to any degree a medal honoring their service and sacrifice is rapidly diminishing, and who are dying at the rate of approximately 15,000 each year; and

WHEREAS, it is only right and proper for the government of the United States to honor these Atomic-Veterans for enduring exposure to atomic radiation and the resultant health problems arising from the faithful performance of their duty in the service of this country; now, therefore

BE IT RESOLVED, that the Department of South Dakota, VFW respectfully urges and requests the Congress of the United States to provide a suitable and fitting recognition of these Atomic-Veterans by authorizing a special Atomic-Veteran-Medal that would properly recognize and honor their faithful service and sacrifice for the United States of America. (Approved)

Resolution No. 302 (Submitted by Department of Nevada)

RIDER GROUPS

WHEREAS, the 111th National Convention approved Resolution 308 on August 23, 2010 to establish a Veterans of Foreign Wars Motorcycle Riders Group/Association, referred to as VFWRG ; and

WHEREAS, the establishment of the VFWRG has sparked an interest by our younger veterans to consider becoming a member of the Veterans of Foreign Wars and that the National Organization now consider the formation of other Rider Groups; and

WHEREAS, by forming other Groups this could lead to increased membership in the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the U.S. and the recognition that “No One Does More” for Veterans; and

WHEREAS, the Department of Nevada along with VFW sponsoring Posts and Districts request approval to extend the scope of the Riders Groups; now, therefore

BE IT RESOLVED, that other groups be allowed to form their own associations that would be known as Veterans of Foreign Wars Off Road Rider Groups to be referred as VFWORRG. This group would include dirt riders and other off road vehicles; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that other groups be allowed to form their own association that would be known as Veterans of Foreign Wars Antique/classic Cars Groups referred to as VFW A/CCRG. (Rejected)

Resolution No. 303 (Submitted by Department of Arizona)

SUPPORT EFFORTS TO INCLUDE 74 SAILORS KILLED ON USS FRANK E. EVANS ON THE VIETNAM VETERANS MEMORIAL “WALL”

WHEREAS, Public Law 96-297, (94 Stat, 827), authorized the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund to construct a memorial to honor and recognize armed forces service in the Vietnam War; and

WHEREAS, the memorial fund relied upon the Department of Defense to compile the list of names and the criteria for those persons to be memorialized; and

WHEREAS, as of February 1981, the Department of Defense established four distinct criteria for names to be included on the memorial; and

WHEREAS, Secretary of Defense shall (as defined in Section 101 (2), of Title 38 United States Code), veterans who died as a direct or indirect result of military operations in Southeast Asia and whose names are eligible for inclusion on the memorial. Congressman Adam B. Schiff presented evidence and petitions in an audience with The Secretary Of The Navy Mabus. The evidence submitted of the tragic accident that destroyed the Frank E. Evans and killed 74 of her Sailors on June 3, 1969. The evidence included actual position, course and reason for being there, Secretary Mabus whole heartedly agreed. He is currently petitioning the Secretary of Defense, whose office serves as the final decision authority to review the case and consider the points we have raised; now, therefore

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that we fully support a favorable decision to the Department of Defense to include the 74 names on the Vietnam Veterans Memorial. (Rejected)

Resolution No. 304 (Submitted by Department of New Jersey)

PROMOTE THE VISION OF THE HONOR AND REMEMBER FLAG

WHEREAS, Honor and Remember, Inc., has been established to create, establish and promote along with our national symbol, the American flag, a nationally recognized flag that would fly continuously as a visible reminder to all Americans of the lives lost in defense of our national freedoms from our nations inception; and

WHEREAS, it should be in our nations interest to promote broad national awareness of the Honor and Remember flag, as an additional remembrance with the American flag; and

WHEREAS, it is the goal of the Honor and Remember organization to make available an Honor and Remember flag to the members of the immediate families who have lost one in military service to America; now, therefore

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States that we call on the Congress of the United States to propose and accept the Honor and Remember flag as an additional honor, along with the American flag, honoring all fallen servicemen and servicewomen; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that a personalized Honor and Remember flag be made available to families who have lost a loved one in military service to America. (Rejected)

Resolution No. 305 (Submitted by Department of Montana)

PROTECT THE AMERICAN FLAG FROM DESECRATION

WHEREAS, we enjoy a greater measure of liberty, justice and equality than any other country throughout history and there is one symbol that above all others depicts the history and values we hold dear, the American flag; and

WHEREAS, in times of crisis, the raising of the Stars and Stripes symbolized the perseverance and enduring strength that patriotic Americans have always taken heart in, knowing that "Our flag was still there"; and

WHEREAS, enemies of American freedom abroad are well aware of the ideals of the American flag, often expressing anti-American sentiment by burning our flag; and

WHEREAS, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled in favor of allowing flag burning here at home in a 1989 decision that overturned 300 years of precedent, whereby the Court struck down all State laws that prohibit flag desecration; and

WHEREAS, the vast majority of Americans and all 50 State legislatures believe the flag should be protected and the only way at the present time is

by passage of a constitutional amendment; now, therefore

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that we cannot allow the radical element to claim flag burning as an exercise of free speech but an act of physical assault on America and its citizens and we urge Congress to pass a constitutional amendment protecting our flag. (Approved)

**RESOLUTIONS CONSIDERED BY COMMITTEE ON NATIONAL
SECURITY AND FOREIGN AFFIARS**

Resolution No. 401 (Submitted by Commander-in-Chief)

**SUPPORT THE TROOPS AND THEIR MISSION
IN THE WAR ON TERRORISM**

WHEREAS, the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States supports the President of the United States and our military and intelligence agencies in their mission to identify and destroy terrorism in Afghanistan and elsewhere; and

WHEREAS, it is critical that the Administration and Congress provide the military with the resources necessary to succeed in battle, as well as to properly care for their families and those who return home wounded; and

WHEREAS, it is equally critical that U.S. intelligence agencies be properly resourced in order to identify threats to U.S. security by organized extremist groups or lone individuals, both foreign and domestic; and

WHEREAS, it is essential that the Administration and Congress heed the expert counsel of field commanders regarding future troop buildups and reductions; now, therefore

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that we support the President and the brave men and women in uniform who prosecute the war on terrorism; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that we call upon the Administration and Congress to provide the military and intelligence agencies the necessary resources to secure victory.

The intent of this resolution is:

To support and fund the troops and intelligence agencies prosecuting the U.S. war on terrorism. (Approved)

Resolution No. 402 (Submitted by Commander-in-Chief)

SECURE AMERICA'S BORDERS

WHEREAS, U.S. citizens continue to be targeted by domestic and

international terrorists, as evidenced by the failed Christmas Day 2009 airline bombing attempt over Detroit, the failed Times Square car bombing attempt in May 2010, and the discovery of al-Qaeda terrorist cells on American soil; and

WHEREAS, homeland security is also threatened by foreign nationals intent on doing us harm who enter the U.S. illegally, as well as those who enter legally but intentionally overstay their work, education or tourist visas. The man arrested in February 2012 on his way to allegedly bomb the U.S. Capitol had been illegally hiding in America ever since his tourist visa expired in 1999; and

WHEREAS, physical barriers are erected along less than 30 percent of our 2,000-mile border with Mexico, and are virtually nonexistent along the 5,000-mile U.S.-Canadian border, plus the U.S. needs to secure more than 16,000 miles of coastline and all airports and shipping ports of entry; and

WHEREAS, current initiatives since late 2007 have increased the Customs and Border Protection workforce from 14,900 to 21,400; and 44 percent of America's southern border is now claimed to be under "operational control"; and

WHEREAS, increased surveillance, enforcement, intelligence collection assets and economic support to border states has reduced violent crime and led to the deportation of 216,000 criminal illegal immigrants for fiscal year 2011; and

WHEREAS, more must still be done to secure America's borders; now, therefore

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that we urge the Administration and Congress to fast-track funding for the Departments of Homeland Security and Justice to expedite all initiatives to secure America's borders from all threats, foreign and domestic; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that we insist the U.S. government aggressively work to identify and deport illegal aliens who commit crimes or overstay their visas.

The intent of this resolution is:

To secure America's borders from all threats, foreign and domestic, and to identify and deport illegal aliens who commit crimes. (Approved as Amended)

Resolution No. 403 (Submitted by Commander-in-Chief)

HALT ROGUE NATION WMD PROGRAMS

WHEREAS, the greatest threat to American security are weapons of mass destruction—and the technology by which to make and employ them—in the hands of North Korea and Iran, as well as nonaligned terrorist

organizations; and

WHEREAS, the Administration and Congress must remain suspicious of the actions and motives of North Korea and Iran, who repeatedly reject diplomatic attempts to reduce tensions and normalize relations; and

WHEREAS, in May 2009, North Korea broke an earlier agreement by conducting an underground nuclear detonation, test fired missiles capable of carrying nuclear warheads, and stated it would no longer honor the 1953 armistice, which is a direct threat to South Korea; and

WHEREAS, Iran has become a military dictatorship through the Revolutionary Guard's rise in economic and political power, and Iranian officials have confirmed that North Korea is assisting them in the development of nuclear weapons technology; and

WHEREAS, nonaligned terrorist organizations, such as al-Qaeda, continue to demonstrate with deadly consequences their ability to strike globally without remorse; now therefore

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that we call upon the Administration and Congress to do all within their power to halt the nuclear weapons development programs of North Korea and Iran, and to stop the transfer of nuclear weapons technology and material to terrorist states and organizations; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that we support and encourage the U.S. Government to penalize all American companies and corporations that conduct business with North Korea and Iran.

The intent of this resolution is:

To halt the nuclear weapons programs of North Korea and Iran, stop the transfer of technology and material to terrorist states and organizations, and penalize all companies and corporations that conduct business with North Korea and Iran. (Approved)

Resolution No. 404 (Submitted by Commander-in-Chief)

KEEP DEFENSE BUDGET RELEVANT

WHEREAS, America's number one priority is to defend herself and her citizens. This is provided by a properly trained, equipped and funded military that can defeat all enemies, as well as safeguard vital U.S. interests around the globe; and

WHEREAS, the nation's economic recovery plan is forcing the Defense Department to reduce its overall budget by at least \$487 billion by fiscal year 2017. In an effort to rein in spending, DOD is recommending a number of proposals that would over the next five years lower the size of the active force by more than 100,000 troops—mostly soldiers and Marines—close installations, eliminate aircraft, ships and Brigade Combat

Teams, overhaul the current military retirement system, and shift more healthcare costs onto military dependents and retirees; and

WHEREAS, the military service chiefs continue to call for the need to reconstitute and modernize the force as a result of the wear and tear on equipment after a decade of war. They and Defense Secretary Leon Panetta also pledge not to break faith with the troops, but by all accounts, the troops and their families are well aware of ongoing efforts to reduce their pay and benefits, which could inevitably lead to recruiting and retention problems; and

WHEREAS, there is merit to some DOD proposals, but not the ones that ask those who sacrifice the most for our nation to sacrifice even more. Once the wars end, it is inevitable that the military will shrink in terms of installations, manpower and material, but bringing the troops home will not make the world less dangerous or our enemies any more predictable. It is crucial that any reduction proposal not jeopardize America's security or break faith with those who serve or have served her in uniform; now, therefore

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that we strongly urge the Administration and Congress to provide adequate funding for the readiness, training, modernization, healthcare, and quality of life initiatives for the armed forces of today and tomorrow.

The intent of this resolution is:

To urge the Administration and Congress to provide adequate funding for the readiness, training, modernization, healthcare, and quality of life initiatives for the armed forces of today and tomorrow. (Approved)

Resolution No. 405 (Submitted by Commander-in-Chief)

BALLISTIC MISSILE DEFENSE A NATIONAL SECURITY PRIORITY

WHEREAS, the greatest strategic threat to the United States is an attack by one or more ballistic missiles armed with nuclear or other warheads of mass destruction. The United States today remains completely vulnerable to this form of attack; and

WHEREAS, the Russian ballistic missile threat to the United States has decreased in recent years because of changes in our strategic relationship; however, due to continued modernization programs, China has become a potential ballistic missile threat, and the worldwide proliferation of technology has also led other nations to possess or develop ballistic missiles capable of being armed with nuclear, chemical or biological warheads; and

WHEREAS, ballistic missile defense systems have a proven capability to be able to detect, intercept and destroy ballistic missiles in flight. Yet despite the growing threat of rogue nations and unstable third world countries, the United States still has no strategic missile defense system to

protect this country and her citizens from nuclear, chemical or biological attack; now, therefore

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that we support the continued development, testing and deployment of ballistic missile defense systems to protect our country and our deployed military forces; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that we call upon the Congress to fully fund ballistic missile defense Research & Development programs as a national security priority.

The intent of this resolution is:

To support a ballistic missile defense system and urge Congress to fully fund R&D programs. (Approved)

Resolution No. 406 (Submitted by Commander-in-Chief)

SUPPORT THE REPUBLIC OF KOREA

WHEREAS, the Republic of Korea is a historic and democratic ally of the United States, a valuable trading partner, and a key link in the northeast Asia defense chain. Numerous treaties are in force with the Republic of Korea concerning, economic and technical cooperation, education, maritime matters, trade and commerce, and the Mutual Defense Treaty, that was enacted on November 17, 1954; and

WHEREAS, South Korea and North Korea signed an Agreement on Reconciliation, Non-aggression, and Exchanges and Cooperation on December 13, 1991, although a year later the North Korean nuclear issue halted progress on that agreement; and

WHEREAS, North Korea continues to maintain an extremely large and forward-deployed military force capable of launching no-notice offensive operations against South Korea;

WHEREAS, North Korea has produced nuclear material for the development of nuclear weapons, and is developing long-range missiles that could reach potential targets in the United States, particularly Alaska. North Korea has also escalated tensions in the region by test launching missiles, and periodically deploying armed forces along the demilitarized zone and Joint Security Area at Panmunjom; and

WHEREAS, it remains unclear what new path, if any, North Korea may take after the death of dictator Kim Jong-il in December 2011 and ascension of his 30-year-old, European-educated son Kim Jong-un. Until known, the continued presence of a large contingent of U.S. ground and air forces in the Republic of Korea is critical to deterring North Korean aggression; now, therefore

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that we urge the government of the United States to maintain a substantial military presence in South Korea, and to increase military aid and assistance through modern weaponry and technology to help promote peace and stability in the region.

The intent of this resolution is:

To urge the U.S. government to keep a military presence in the Republic of Korea, and to increase military aid and assistance to help promote peace and stability in the region. (Approved)

Resolution No. 407 (Submitted by Commander-in-Chief)

SUPPORT THE REPUBLIC OF CHINA ON TAIWAN

WHEREAS, the Republic of China on Taiwan is a historic and democratic ally of the United States, a valuable trading partner, and key link in the Western Pacific defense chain; and

WHEREAS, the Peoples Republic of China continues to oppose the admission of Taiwan into the United Nations, and has continued its military buildup, including the deployment of short and medium-range missiles across the Formosa Strait from Taiwan; and

WHEREAS, the Taiwan Relations Act (PL 96-8) codifies the policy of the United States to provide Taiwan with arms of a defensive character to bolster peace and stability in the cross-strait environment; and

WHEREAS, on January 1, 1979, then-President Carter terminated diplomatic relations between the U.S. and Taiwan, and established diplomatic relations with Communist China in an attempt to help maintain peace, security and stability in the Western Pacific; and

WHEREAS, this loss of diplomatic status prevents the President of Taiwan from receiving the same respect and courtesies afforded other Heads of State who visit the U.S.; now, therefore

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that we urge the Administration and Congress to strictly adhere to the concepts of the Taiwan Relations Act by approving the sale of state-of-the-art military equipment, weapons and technology to maintain an adequate defense capability; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that we call upon the Administration and Congress to support the admission of the Republic of China on Taiwan into the United Nations, and to afford the President of Taiwan the same respect and privileges due other visiting Heads of State.

The intent of this resolution is:

To urge the Administration and the Congress to strictly adhere to the concepts of the Taiwan Relations Act, to urge the U.S. government to

employ its full range of influence to contain aggressive posturing of the Peoples Republic of China, and to afford the Taiwan Head of State equal respect and privileges. (Approved)

Resolution No. 408 (Submitted by Commander-in-Chief)

RAISE MILITARY BASE PAY TO EQUAL PRIVATE-SECTOR WAGES

WHEREAS, military pay raises are linked to the increase in private-sector wages, as measured by the Employment Cost Index (ECI). Unless specifically increased by Congress, annual military pay raises were capped in the 1990s at one-half percent below private-sector growth, which in 1999 resulted in a military pay gap of 13.5 percent below private-sector wages; and

WHEREAS, to help close the gap, Congress directed that military pay raises from FY 2000-2006 be automatically one-half percent above private-sector wage increases, and raises from FY 2007-forward would automatically match the increase in the ECI, unless Congress authorized a further increase; and

WHEREAS, the FY 2010 pay raise of 3.4 percent was 2.4 percent behind private-sector wages. The FY 2011 pay raise of 1.4 percent was the lowest since 1962 and the 1.6 percent for FY 2012 matches the ECI; however, Defense Department proposals for 1.7 percent raises for FY 2013 and 2014, followed by a 0.5 percent request for FY 2015 and 1 percent in FY 2016, will further widen the existing military pay gap; now, therefore

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that we call upon Congress to achieve full military base pay comparability with private-sector wages; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that a slow economy and reduced defense budget are not valid rationale to underpay a military that has singularly borne the brunt of more than a decade of war.

The intent of this resolution is:

To achieve full military base pay comparability with private-sector wages. (Approved)

Resolution No. 409 (Submitted by Commander-in-Chief)

LOWER THE RESERVE COMPONENT RETIREMENT PAY AGE

WHEREAS, after a decade of conflict, the Reserve Component evolved rapidly from a strategic reserve to an operational force that provides a quarter of all ground troops and half the airlift to the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, yet the retirement age requirement did not evolve accordingly. Current law stipulates that Reserve Component members who complete 20 or more qualifying years of honorable service must wait until age 60 before they are eligible to receive military retirement pay; and

WHEREAS, the FY 2008 defense bill did reduce the retirement pay age by 90 days for every 90 activated, but only for those Guardsmen/Reservists who earned active credit after Jan. 29, 2008, thereby discounting the equally honorable service of hundreds of thousands of Reserve Component members who were activated between 9/11 and Jan. 28, 2008; and

WHEREAS, the active force cannot meet its national military commitments without the 1.1 million men and women who serve in the Reserve Components—the Army and Air National Guard, Army Reserve, Naval Reserve, Air Force Reserve, Marine Corps Reserve and Coast Guard Reserve—who collectively represent one-half of America's total military strength; and

WHEREAS, a truly seamless and integrated total force is one that does not make rigid distinctions among active, Guard and Reserve forces, and one that provides a retirement benefit equal to their contributions; now, therefore

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that we urge the Congress and the Administration to lower the Reserve Component retirement pay eligibility age from 60 to 55.

The intent of this resolution is:

To support legislation that will lower the Reserve Component retirement pay eligibility age from 60 to 55. (Approved)

Resolution No. 410 (Submitted by Commander-in-Chief)

CORRECT FY08 NDAA RESERVE RETIREMENT PAY PROVISION

WHEREAS, since September 11, 2001, America's reliance on its Reserve Component at home and abroad is unprecedented in our Nation's history. More than 840,000 Reserve Component members have served on active duty since Sept. 11, 2001—including more than 300,000 who have served multiple tours; and

WHEREAS, the Fiscal Year 2008 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) allows National Guard and Reserve members to receive retirement pay earlier than the normal age 60 by three months for every 90 days served on active duty after January 29, 2008; and

WHEREAS, the overwhelming majority of these Reserve Component members, however, are ineligible to credit their active service toward an earlier retirement because it occurred prior to the NDAA's Jan. 29, 2008, implementation date; and

WHEREAS, this inequity shamefully overlooks the dedication and sacrifice of our Reserve Component members serving at home and abroad; now, therefore

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that we urge Congress to enact legislation to retroactively grant early retirement credit to all Reserve Component members who were activated in support of a contingency operation from 9/11 forward, as outlined in the FY 2008 National Defense Authorization Act.

The intent of this resolution is:

To urge Congress to retroactively grant early retirement credit to all Reserve Component members who were activated in support of a contingency operation from 9/11 forward, as outlined in the FY 2008 National Defense Authorization Act. (Approved)

Resolution No. 411 (Submitted by the Commander-in-Chief)

STOP EROSION OF MILITARY PAY & BENEFITS

WHEREAS, military pay and benefits are the Number #1 issues of concern among the troops and their families, yet the Defense Department in its fiscal year 2013 budget submission wants to restrain future military pay raises, increase healthcare deductibles and copayments, almost quadruple military retiree Tricare fees, and change the military retirement system; and

WHEREAS, the troops are deeply concerned that DOD is putting the budget ahead of the people, and that deeper Quality of Life program cuts may still be ahead, which will factor heavily into any military career decision; and

WHEREAS, their concern is validated by DOD recommendations for scant pay increases of 0.5 percent to 1.7 percent over the next five years, and a tripling of prescription copayments on their dependents. The troops also see DOD breaking faith with the 8 percent of the force who reach retirement age. Plans to almost quadruple Tricare enrollment fees on working age retirees, and to create an escalating Tricare for Life enrollment fee on retirees 65 and older—who already pay mandatory Medicare Part B premiums—are meant to produce savings by driving retirees out of Tricare and into civilian primary or secondary insurance plans; and

WHEREAS, plans to reshape the military retirement system into a more participatory, civilianized model completely disregards the upfront costs career military personnel and their families must first pay through multiple moves, deployments and children uprooted from schools, spouses unable to maintain careers, and potential age discrimination entering a civilian job market after first donating 20 or more years of their youth to the nation; and

WHEREAS, DOD may further attempt to balance its budget on the backs of military families and retirees through a further erosion of benefits, which will negatively impact recruiting and retention, and possibly threaten the continued viability of the All-Volunteer Military; now, therefore

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that we vigorously oppose the further erosion of military pay and benefits, increased Tricare fees, deductibles and co-pays, and all efforts to civilianize the military retirement system.

The intent of this resolution is:

To vigorously oppose the further erosion of military pay and benefits, increased Tricare fees, deductibles and co-pays, and all efforts to civilianize the military retirement system. (Approved)

Resolution No. 412 (Submitted by Commander-in-Chief)

REFORM THE UNIFORMED SERVICES FORMER SPOUSES PROTECTION ACT

WHEREAS, in 1981, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled in *McCarty vs. McCarty* that military retirement pay is not divisible as community property in divorce proceedings. However, in 1982, Congress adopted the Uniformed Services Former Spouses Protection Act to circumvent the Supreme Court decision, thereby allowing military retirement pay to be divided in divorce settlements; and

WHEREAS, thousands of military retirees are now under court-ordered garnishment because state courts have ruled military pay to be a property asset, causing military retirees to pay a court-ordered percentage of their retirement pay to former spouses regardless of fault, merit or need, and regardless of whether the former spouse remarries; and

WHEREAS, certain inequities exist in the USFSPA, including the “windfall provision,” which grants divorce awards based upon the pay on the date of retirement not on the date of divorce, as well as a provision that requires service members with more than 20 years of service to divide their expected retired pay before their actual retirement date; now, therefore

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that we urge the Congress to reform the Uniformed Services Former Spouses Protection Act to include granting divorce awards based on the service member’s rank at the time of divorce, to not require service members with more than 20 years of service to divide expected retired pay before they actually retire, and to terminate payments if the former spouse remarries.

The intent of this resolution is:

To urge Congress to reform the Uniformed Services Former Spouses Protection Act to include granting divorce awards based on the service member’s rank at the time of divorce, to not require service members with more than 20 years of service to divide expected retired pay before they actually retire, and to terminate payments if the former spouse remarries. (Approved)

Resolution No. 413 (Submitted by Commander-in-Chief)

INTERSTATE COMPACT ON EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITY
FOR MILITARY CHILDREN

WHEREAS, military families encounter school challenges for their children for enrollment, eligibility, placement and graduation due to frequent relocations. The Interstate Compact on Educational Opportunity for Military Children provides for the uniform treatment of military children transferring between school districts and states; and

WHEREAS, it was developed by The Council of State Governments' National Center for Interstate Compacts, the Department of Defense, national associations, federal and state officials, departments of education, school administrators and military families; and

WHEREAS, the Interstate Compact would allow the laws of the "sending" state to apply to transferring students from military families in the schools of the "receiving" state for such policies as graduation requirements, Advanced Placements, and the age of student enrollment; and

WHEREAS, the Interstate Compact would apply to the children of active duty members of the uniformed services, including members of the National Guard and Reserve on active duty orders; veterans who are severely injured and medically discharged or retired for a period of one year after medical discharge or retirement; and members of the uniformed services who die on active duty or as a result of injuries sustained on active duty for a period of one year after death; and

WHEREAS, the Interstates Compact is currently active in 39 states, who account for more than 80 percent of the total number of military children educated off base; and

WHEREAS, the voluntary adoption of the Interstate Compact by every state government will address key child educational issues encountered by all military families; now, therefore

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that we call upon 11 State Governments—Arkansas, Connecticut, Georgia, Idaho, Massachusetts, Minnesota, Montana, New Hampshire, New York, Oregon, Wyoming, plus the District of Columbia—to expeditiously adopt the language of the Interstate Compact on Educational Opportunity for Military Children.

The intent of this resolution is:

To call upon 11 State Governments—Arkansas, Connecticut, Georgia, Idaho, Massachusetts, Minnesota, Montana, New Hampshire, New York, Oregon, Wyoming, plus the District of Columbia— to adopt the Interstate Compact on Educational Opportunity for Military Children. (Approved)

Resolution No. 414 (Submitted by Commander-in-Chief)

CHILD CUSTODY PROTECTION FOR DEPLOYED SINGLE PARENTS

WHEREAS, there is no legal safeguard that protects military single parents from being sued for permanent custody of their children while they are deployed; and

WHEREAS, military single parents are required to have a family care plan to delegate caregiver responsibilities—not legal custody—of their minor children to aunts and uncles, grandparents, or former spouses or in-laws, for example. During child custody challenges, however, some civilian courts have ignored family care plans even though the military single parent is deployed and cannot appear in court to defend his or her right to custody; and

WHEREAS, each State approaches family law differently, which makes it impossible for the military to create one document that would be legally binding nationwide; and

WHEREAS, child custody challenges put undue mental stress on deployed service members, which could negatively impact their duty performance and safety; and

WHEREAS, the Servicemembers Civil Relief Act does not adequately protect service members from child custody challenges while deployed, therefore, a need exists for more federal guidance so that no court at any level can permanently alter an existing child custody agreement while a military parent is deployed; now, therefore

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that we urge Congress to amend the Servicemembers Civil Relief Act to prevent permanent changes to child custody arrangements while service members are deployed.

The intent of this resolution is:

To urge Congress to amend the Servicemembers Civil Relief Act to prevent permanent changes to child custody arrangements while service members are deployed. (Approved)

Resolution No. 415 (Submitted by Commander-in-Chief)

MILITARY ABSENTEE VOTING

WHEREAS, local, state and federal government agencies have a moral obligation to provide the means necessary to enable all armed forces personnel the timely opportunity to take part in all elections; and

WHEREAS, the Military and Overseas Voter Empowerment (MOVE) Act of 2009 removed many obstacles to voting by mandating all absentee paper ballots be mailed at least 45 days in advance, making electronic ballots available for downloading, eliminating the notarized or witnessed ballot requirement, and expanding the acceptance of Federal Write-In

Absentee Ballots; and

WHEREAS, despite much improvement by the states to comply with the MOVE Act, a January 2012 national study by The Pew Center found that military voters from four states—Alaska, California, New York and West Virginia—are still unable to vote due to insufficient time allotted to apply for, complete, and return absentee paper ballots in time to be counted; and

WHEREAS, in addition, four states—Alabama, Alaska, Virginia and Wisconsin—have yet to remove the notary/witness requirement from absentee ballots; and

WHEREAS, 16 states—Alabama, Arizona, Hawaii, Idaho, Illinois, Iowa, Kansas, Kentucky, Louisiana, Michigan, Missouri, New Hampshire, Pennsylvania, South Dakota, Vermont and Wyoming—do not accept the use of Federal Write-In Absentee Ballots for local and state elections; now, therefore

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that our Department Legislative Committees will work with 22 state governments to ensure they adopt all corrective measures as expressed in the MOVE Act of 2009; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that we urge the federal government to assess monetary penalties against those states who fail.

The intent of this resolution is:

To have VFW Department Legislative Committees work with 22 state governments to ensure they adopt all corrective measures as expressed in the MOVE Act of 2009, and to urge the federal government to assess monetary penalties against those states who fail. (Approved)

Resolution No. 416 (Submitted by Commander-in-Chief)

CONCURRENT RECEIPT OF MILITARY RETIREMENT PAY AND VA DISABILITY COMPENSATION

WHEREAS, in 2004, Congress passed legislation that allowed for the gradual phase-in of full concurrent receipt of military retirement pay and Department of Veterans Affairs disability compensation for service-connected injuries or disabilities; and

WHEREAS, the passed law phases out the VA disability offset by 2014, which means military retirees with 20 or more years of service and a 50-percent or higher VA disability rating will no longer have their military retirement pay reduced by the amount of their VA disability compensation; and

WHEREAS, the current law does not provide the same equity to those service-connected disabled military retirees with VA ratings of 40 percent or below, or Chapter 61 retirees, who were medically retired with less than 20 years, regardless of VA disability rating; now, therefore

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that we support legislation for the full concurrent receipt of military retirement pay and VA disability compensation without offset and regardless of rating percentage.

The intent of this resolution is:

To support legislation for the full concurrent receipt of military retirement pay and VA disability compensation without offset and regardless of the rating percentage. (Approved)

Resolution No. 417 (Submitted by Commander-in-Chief)

EASE MILITARY LICENSING AND CREDENTIALING

WHEREAS, transitioning service members often face significant delays and lost job opportunities because not all the states recognize military training and experience as qualifying factors toward occupational licensing, credentialing and/or academic credit. In addition, service members who already hold licenses in good standing from certain states cannot easily transfer these licenses to other jurisdictions; and

WHEREAS, actions states can take to assist service members with licensing and certification portability are to endorse current licenses if requirements are substantially equivalent to the gaining state; provide credit toward licensure based on military training and experience; and adhere to American Council on Education standards when considering military education, training and experience toward academic credit; and

WHEREAS, 8 states—Colorado, Kentucky, Louisiana, Tennessee, Texas, Utah, Virginia and Washington—have adopted legislative language to support military licensing accommodations or academic credit allowances without compromising professional or academic standards; and

WHEREAS, 14 additional states—Alaska, California, Florida, Hawaii, Indiana, Missouri, Nebraska, New York, North Carolina, Ohio, Oklahoma, Oregon, West Virginia and Wisconsin—have proposed legislation to support licensing accommodations or academic credit allowances without compromising professional or academic standards; and

WHEREAS, through the White House Joining Forces program, First Lady Michelle Obama and Dr. Jill Biden are now working to promote this Quality of Life initiative to the 28 other governors; now, therefore

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that our Department Legislative Committees will urge the remaining 28 state governors to urge their support in promoting military licensing and credentialing accommodations and academic credit allowances within their states; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the national organization will urge the military services to ensure training standards are consistent with relevant

civilian licensing and credentialing programs to help build an employment-ready force.

The intent of this resolution is:

To urge 28 state governors to promote military licensing and credentialing accommodations and academic credit allowances within their states, and to urge the military services to ensure training standards are consistent with relevant civilian licensing and credentialing programs. (Approved)

Resolution No. 418 (Submitted by Commander-in-Chief)

EASE MILITARY SPOUSE LICENSING
AND CREDENTIALING PORTABILITY

WHEREAS, moving is tough enough on military families, but it's even tougher on the one-third of working spouses who are in professions that require licenses or certifications; and

WHEREAS, actions the states can currently take to assist military spouses with licensing and certification portability are to endorse current licenses if requirements are substantially equivalent to the gaining state; provide provisional licenses to allow military spouses to work while applying for gaining state licenses; and expediting application procedures; and

WHEREAS, 11 states—Alaska, Arizona, Colorado, Florida, Kentucky, Missouri, Montana, Tennessee, Texas, Utah and Washington—have adopted legislative language to support military spouse license portability without lowering any professional standards; and

WHEREAS, 13 states—Colorado, Delaware, Hawaii, Indiana, Kansas, Nebraska, New York, North Carolina, Ohio, Oklahoma, South Carolina, Virginia and West Virginia—have proposed legislation to ease the portability of licenses and certifications without lowering any professional standards; and

WHEREAS, through the White House Joining Forces program, First Lady Michelle Obama and Dr. Jill Biden are now working to get this Quality of Life initiative out of the other 26 governors' inboxes; now, therefore

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that our Department Legislative Committees will work with the remaining 26 state governors to urge their support to increase the portability of military spouse licensing and certifications.

The intent of this resolution is:

To have VFW Department Legislative Committees work with 26 state governments to urge their support to increase the portability of military spouse licensing and certifications. (Approved)

Resolution No. 419 (Submitted by Commander-in-Chief)

ALLOW SECOND POV SHIPMENT TO ALASKA, HAWAII

WHEREAS, the Defense Department does not authorize a second Privately Owned Vehicle (POV) to be shipped by military members being reassigned to Alaska and Hawaii, even though the government will ship motorcycles and boats, provided the service member's maximum weight allowance is not exceeded; and

WHEREAS, the great majority of military families are two-income families with two vehicles, yet this restriction places an unnecessary roadblock in their ability to quickly assimilate into a new assignment; and

WHEREAS, not allowing a second POV shipment adds the additional requirement of having to purchase another vehicle on top of traditional moving stresses, such as locating housing, schools, churches, grocery stores and spouse employment; and

WHEREAS, not allowing a second POV shipment to Alaska and Hawaii is a negative impact on a military family's Quality of Life; now therefore

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that we strongly urge the Department of Defense to amend the Joint Federal Travel Regulation to permit military personnel being reassigned to Alaska and Hawaii to ship a second Privately Owned Vehicle, provided their maximum weight allowance is not exceeded.

The intent of this resolution is:

To urge DOD to permit military personnel being reassigned to Alaska and Hawaii to ship a second POV, provided their maximum weight allowance is not exceeded. (Approved)

Resolution No. 420 (Submitted by Commander-in-Chief)

PROVIDE DD-214s TO RESERVE COMPONENT MEMBERS

WHEREAS, all active, Guard and Reserve veterans are eligible for VA medical care, as well as compensation and pension, if a service-connected injury occurred while on active duty; and

WHEREAS, eligibility for other VA benefits is based on presenting proof of active military service in the form of a DD Form 214. According to Title 10, U.S. Code, a member of the Guard or Reserve can only receive a DD-214 if they serve 90 days of continuous active duty, although Service Secretaries have the authority to issue the forms for shorter time periods; and

WHEREAS, the Guard and Reserve constitute one-quarter of all forces deployed to Iraq and Afghanistan, and it constitutes half of all Air Force airlift, yet similar to the active force, not every Reserve Component

member has had the opportunity to deploy much less be activated for 90 consecutive days; now, therefore

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that we urge Congress to delete the 90-day activation requirement in Title 10, U.S. Code, and to provide the DD Form 214 to all Reserve Component members who separate or retire under conditions other than dishonorable.

The intent of this resolution is:

To urge Congress to delete the 90-day activation requirement in Title 10, U.S. Code, and to provide the DD Form 214 to all Reserve Component members who separate or retire under conditions other than dishonorable. (Approved)

Resolution No. 421 (Submitted by Commander-in-Chief)

POW/MIA FULL ACCOUNTING MISSION FUNDING

WHEREAS, the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States is deeply committed to achieving the fullest possible accounting of America's 83,000 missing servicemen that include 73,000 from World War II, 8,000 from the Korean War, 1,670 from the Vietnam War, 120 from the Cold War, two from Operation Desert Storm, and one from the war in Afghanistan; and

WHEREAS, the FY 2010 National Defense Authorization Act requires the Defense Department to begin identifying a minimum of 200 sets of remains by 2015; however, the congressional mandate came without additional funding or personnel. Beginning with FY 2012, the Administration proposed significant budget increases for the Joint POW/MIA Accounting Command (JPAC) from \$104.1 million this year to \$143.9 million in FY 2016; and

WHEREAS, full congressional funding for JPAC and the other DOD organizations involved in the Full Accounting Mission is critical to meeting and exceeding the new congressional mandate. Full funding is even more important now that recovery operations in North Korea could resume after a seven-year interruption due to U.S. safety and security concerns; and

WHEREAS, without additional funding to meet the expanded requirements, JPAC could be forced to postpone or cancel difficult recovery sites in favor of potentially more productive locations, such as mass burials or multi-crewman aircraft crashes; and

WHEREAS, full funding enables JPAC to efficiently plan, resource and accomplish their worldwide mission to recovery, identify and return to their families all missing American service members from all wars and conflicts; now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that we call upon Congress to fully fund the requested amounts for all

DOD organizations involved in the Full Accounting Mission.

The intent of this resolution is:

To call upon Congress to fully fund the requested amounts for all DOD organizations involved in the Full Accounting Mission. (Approved as Amended)

Resolution No. 422 (Submitted by Commander-in-Chief)

PRESERVE INTEGRITY OF U.S.-RUSSIA JOINT COMMISSION

WHEREAS, the U.S. Department of Defense has threatened the viability and continued existence of the U.S.-Russia Joint Commission on POW/MIAs, which was established in March 1992 by the President of the United States and the Russian Federation to serve as a non-political and non-bureaucratic forum through which both nations could seek to determine the fate of missing and unaccounted-for servicemen; and

WHEREAS, a 2005 reduction in the size of the Russian government eliminated the Commission's Russian co-chairman, which ended American access to their central military archives; however, diplomatic notes passed in July 2009 between President Obama and Russian President Medvedev helped to reopen their military archives to U.S. researchers as well as increased access to potential eyewitnesses. In June 2011, less than three weeks after the VFW led seven other veterans' and POW/MIA family organizations to write the Russian president to urge his support of the Joint Commission, he appointed a new Russian co-chairman and 31 new commissioners; and

WHEREAS, Russia is upholding its end of the Commission but the U.S. Defense Department is not. Within that same timeframe—and against White House guidance—DOD reduced Commission funding and manpower to the point of mission failure, which will severely constrain U.S. efforts to account for missing Americans from World War II forward in the former Soviet Union and its former satellite countries; and

WHEREAS, the lessening of U.S. resolve will an unmistakable signal to the American people—and the Russian government—that America has chosen to diminish her commitment to the Full Accounting mission; now, therefore

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that we call upon President Obama and his Administration to keep the U.S.-Russia Joint Commission on POW/MIAs intact in mission, personnel and funding.

The intent of this resolution is:

To call upon President Obama and his Administration to keep the U.S.-Russia Joint Commission on POW/MIA Affairs intact in mission, personnel and funding. (Approved)

Resolution No. 423 (Submitted by Commander-in-Chief)

CALL FOR MORE VIETNAM POW/MIA UNILATERAL ACTIONS

WHEREAS, diplomatic relations between the United States Government and the Government of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam (SRV) were established in July 1995 following assurances from Vietnamese officials that improved bilateral relations would result in expanded cooperation to achieve the fullest possible accounting of Americans captured, missing or killed during the Vietnam War; and

WHEREAS, on March 20, 2002, President Bush issued Presidential Determination 2002-11, stating that Vietnam's unilateral provision of POW/MIA-related documents and records should be improved, focused initially on archival data pertaining to Americans captured, missing or killed in areas of Laos and Cambodia under wartime Vietnamese control. It also stipulated that the government of Vietnam must take unilateral actions aimed at locating and repatriating the remains of those who died while in Vietnamese control who have not yet been returned; and

WHEREAS, on June 25, 2008, President Bush expressed his appreciation to Vietnamese Prime Minister Nguyen Tan Dung for Vietnam's cooperation in the joint humanitarian effort to achieve the fullest possible accounting for Americans who remain missing in action, and for Vietnam's willingness to carry out additional measures, which starting in 2011 has produced Vietnamese-led recovery operations to augment U.S. efforts; now, therefore

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that we encourage Vietnam to continue to expand the number and frequency of Vietnamese-led recovery operations; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, in this cooperative effort, that we urge Vietnam to authorize its officials to locate and release immediately to the United States all records relating to Americans missing from the Vietnam War, and to urge the Vietnamese people to turn over the remains of Americans or information on American burial sites, and any reports of live American servicemen.

The intent of this resolution is:

To encourage Vietnam to continue to expand the number and frequency of Vietnamese-led recovery operations, and to request Vietnam release all documents and possible remains pertaining to Americans still missing from the Vietnam War. (Approved)

Resolution No. 424 (Submitted by the Department of Michigan)

RE-DESIGNATE THE POSITION OF SECRETARY OF THE NAVY AS
THE SECRETARY OF THE NAVY AND MARINE CORPS

WHEREAS, on November 10, 1775, the Continental Congress meeting

in Philadelphia passed a resolution directing that two battalions of Marines be raised for the service as landing forces with the fleet, thereby establishing the Continental Marines and signifying the birth of the United States Marine Corps; and

WHEREAS, Marines throughout our Nation's history have often been called upon to be the first into battle and have accepted this duty without hesitation, and with a sense of honor and esprit de corps that is second to none; and

WHEREAS, Marine Corps units constitute approximately 20 percent of the United States military's active ground maneuver battalions, 20 percent of the active fighter/attack squadrons, 17 percent of the attack helicopters, and nearly one third of the ground combat service support in the active forces; and

WHEREAS, throughout the 236-year history of the Navy and Marine Corps, they have fought side by side as a cohesive team against any interest that would do or cause harm to this Nation; and

WHEREAS, the Marine Corps is the only service in the Department of Defense without a specific service Secretary, as the Secretary of the Navy serves as both the Secretary of the Navy and Secretary of the Marine Corps; now, therefore

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that we support legislation to re-designate the position of the Secretary of the Navy to the Secretary of the Navy and the Marine Corps.

The intent of this resolution is:

To re-designate the position of the Secretary of the Navy to the Secretary of the Navy and the Marine Corps. (Approved)

Resolution No. 425 (Submitted by the Department of Montana)

KEEP GUANTANAMO BAY OPEN TO IMPRISON TERRORISTS

WHEREAS, the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States is an organization dedicated to see Americans work and live in peace, safe from foreign aggression and terrorism; and

WHEREAS, the terrorists acts by radical groups in recent years that have killed thousands of Americans and destroyed billions of dollars in property have awakened the United States to the dangers of terrorism; and

WHEREAS, the United States elected to imprison captured terrorists at the U.S. detention facility at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba; and

WHEREAS, by Executive Order, the President of the United States intends to close Guantanamo Bay and to transfer the held terrorists to either an existing prison in the United States or to possibly a new prison,

that would cost of hundreds of millions of dollars to construct; now, therefore

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that we urge the President of the United States to reverse the Executive Order he signed January 22, 2009, and to keep Guantanamo Bay open to imprison captured terrorists now and in the future.

The intent of this resolution is:

To urge the President of the United States to reverse the Executive Order he signed January 22, 2009, and to keep Guantanamo Bay open to imprison captured terrorists now and in the future. (Approved)

Resolution No. 426 (Submitted by the Department of Montana)

TRY TERRORISTS IN MILITARY COURTS AT GUANTANAMO BAY

WHEREAS, the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States is an organization dedicated to see Americans work and live in peace, safe from foreign aggression and terrorism; and

WHEREAS, the terrorists acts by radical groups in recent years that have killed thousands of Americans and destroyed billions of dollars in property have awakened the United States to the dangers of terrorism; and

WHEREAS, the United States elected to imprison captured terrorists at the U.S. detention facility at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba; and

WHEREAS, the Attorney General of the United States decision to try these terrorists in civil courts on U.S. soil could expose our citizens to further attack by radical groups who have declared a holy war against the United States; and

WHEREAS, acts of war against the United States need to be tried in military courts under military law; now, therefore

BE IT RESOLVED by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that we urge the President of the United States to reverse the decision of the Attorney General and try the terrorists in military courts at the U.S. detention facility at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba.

The intent of this resolution is:

To urge the President of the United States to reverse the decision of the Attorney General and try the terrorists in military courts at the U.S. detention facility at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba. (Approved)

Resolution No. 427 (Submitted by the Department of Montana)

REDIRECT FOREIGN AID TO FUND THE HEALTH CARE ACT OF 1996

WHEREAS, the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States is an organization dedicated to the proposition that the United States remain strong militarily, financially and morally; and

WHEREAS, today we find the United States suffering financially and unable to honor its moral position to provide funding for the original "Health Care Eligibility Act of 1996," which would allow all honorably discharged veterans to enjoy VA health services; and

WHEREAS, we find our nation giving billions of dollars to foreign governments in aid for various reasons; and

WHEREAS, we find this action of giving away American treasure to foreign governments should be stopped, so that these billions of dollars could be better used to balance our own budget, and to supply the funding needed to provide health care for the men and women who have kept America free; now, therefore

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that we urge Congress and the President of the United States to redirect foreign aid to fund the original "Health Care Eligibility Act of 1996."

The intent of this resolution is:

To urge Congress and the President of the United States to redirect foreign aid to fund the original "Health Care Eligibility Act of 1996."
(Rejected)

Resolution No. 428 (Submitted by the Department of Montana)

NATIONAL DEFENSE AUTHORIZATION ACT OF 2012,
SECTION 1021, IS UNCONSTITUTIONAL

WHEREAS, the 5th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution reads "No person shall be held to answer for a capital, or otherwise infamous crime, unless on a presentment or indictment of Grand Jury, except in cases arising in the land and naval forces, or in the militia, when in actual service in time of war or public danger, nor shall any person be subject for the same offense to be twice put in jeopardy of life or limb nor shall be compelled in any criminal case to be a witness against himself, nor be deprived of life, liberty, or property, without due process of law; nor shall private property be taken for public use without just compensation"; and

WHEREAS, all members of the VFW have taken an oath to defend the Constitution from all enemies foreign and domestic, and we who have taken the oath to protect the Constitution will not stand idly by while it is dismantled and our precious Republic is lost. All members of the VFW also took the VFW oath, which demands fealty to the Constitution; and

WHEREAS, Congress has recently seen fit to pass legislation in direct conflict with the Constitution, most conspicuously the removal of Habeas Corpus and posse comitatus from Section 1021 of the National Defense

Authorization Act of 2012; and

WHEREAS, the use of military troops as a police force within the boundaries of the United States of America is strictly forbidden by the Constitution; and

WHEREAS, the arrest and detainment of an American citizen indefinitely and without trial is strictly forbidden by the Constitution, and the VFW strongly objects to these attempts by the Congress to undermine the Constitution; and

WHEREAS, the VFW is bound to serve veterans and provide them with a voice in government, and we call on all lawmakers and government officials to examine their actions and correct these heinous acts; and

WHEREAS, any law that is repugnant to the Constitution is of no effect, cannot and will not be obeyed, and the VFW demands a return to the rule of law and constitutional government; now, therefore

BE IT RESOLVED by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that these and all other laws repugnant to the Constitution be stricken from the Record, and those that would advance them be censored.

The intent of this resolution is:

To strongly object to attempts by Congress to undermine the Constitution by removing Habeas Corpus protections and posse comitatus prohibitions from Section 1021 of the National Defense Authorization Act of 2012. (Rejected)

Resolution No. 429 (Submitted by the Department of California)

CONTINUE MILITARY PAY DURING GOVERNMENT SHUTDOWNS

WHEREAS, America's number one priority is to provide for the defense of the nation and security of her citizens, and this is provided by a properly funded military establishment that can defeat all enemies, as well as safeguard vital U. S. interests around the globe; and

WHEREAS, from time to time, severe economic conditions, coupled with bureaucratic posturing at the highest echelons of our nation's democratic structure, result in temporary government shutdowns; and

WHEREAS, even during instances of government shutdowns, certain classes of federal government personnel continue to receive uninterrupted pay and benefits, due to the vital nature of their functions; and

WHEREAS, the nation's active duty military personnel have been inappropriately omitted from the aforementioned group of federal employees who perform vital government functions; and

WHEREAS, government shutdowns, though temporary in nature, inflicts

major stress on those impacted, which is extremely detrimental to the readiness and focus of active duty military personnel, especially those serving in harm's way, protecting the nation's global interests; and

WHEREAS, our nation's active duty military personnel most assuredly need to be included in the population of federal employees performing vital services to our nation, and therefore should continue to receive uninterrupted pay and benefits during government shutdowns; now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that we strongly urge the Administration and Congress to ensure active duty military personnel continue to receive uninterrupted pay and benefits during government shutdown periods.

The intent of this resolution is:

To strongly urge the Administration and Congress to ensure active duty military personnel continue to receive uninterrupted pay and benefits during government shutdown periods. (Approved)

Resolution No. 430 (Submitted by the Department of Minnesota)

CLARK VETERANS CEMETERY RESTORATION

WHEREAS, there are more than 8,600 Veterans and their dependents buried at Clark Veterans Cemetery, Philippines. Some sites date back to the 1890's and many are Unknown soldiers and sailors that died during the Spanish American War; and

WHEREAS, following World War II, four American Military cemeteries were consolidated at the former Clark Air Force Base. Many of these former cemeteries were damaged during the bombing and fighting during World War II; and

WHEREAS, after the close of Clark Air Force Base in 1991, there were no provisions made to maintain the cemetery. After several years of complete abandonment, VFW Post 2845 in Angeles City, Philippines made arrangements with the Philippine Government to maintain the area. The expenses have been shouldered by the Post since 1994. And Veterans' Burials are still conducted at the cemetery; and

WHEREAS, the importance of military service is recognized by every nation. The benefits of military service are both tangible and intangible. Pride of service to one's nation and the knowledge that one's duty has been performed is often the primary reward. There are promises made by governments that those who sacrificed and suffered will be cared for by the nation that put them at risk. This monograph deals primarily with the promise made to servicemen that they would not be left behind. America has failed in that obligation to over 8,600 Veterans and their dependents whose final resting place is the Clark Veterans Cemetery, Philippines; now, therefore

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that we support the Clark Veterans Cemetery Restoration Association (CVCRA) in their efforts to increase public awareness and lobby the U. S. Government to do the right thing; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Veterans of Foreign Wars supports legislation that will place Clark Veterans Cemetery under the control of the United State Government; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the cemetery be managed by the National Cemetery Administration of the Department of Veterans Affairs, or the American Battle Monuments Commission overseas.

The intent of this resolution is:

To support the Clark Veterans Cemetery Restoration Association, and to support legislation to place the Clark Veterans Cemetery under the control of the United State Government, either the Department of Veterans Affairs or American Battle Monuments Commission. (Rejected for R431)

Resolution No. 431 (Submitted by the Department of Pacific Areas)

CLARK VETERANS CEMETERY A U.S. GOVERNMENT RESPONSIBILITY

WHEREAS, in 1949, the U.S. Air Force assumed responsibility of Fort Stotsenburg in the Philippines and officially renamed it Clark Air Base. The Air Force also assumed sole responsibility for budgeting and administering the Clark Veterans Cemetery, which was established in 1947 as the final resting place for 5,056 reinterred non-World War II veterans from the Fort McKinley cemetery near Manila, two smaller Stotsenburg cemeteries and the Navy's Sangley Point cemetery; and

WHEREAS, the devastation caused by the combination of Typhoon Yunya and Mount Pinatubo in 1991 caused the Air Force to abandon Clark Air Base. Following the complete departure of U.S. military from the Philippines in 1992, the Clark Veterans Cemetery fell into serious disrepair because no provisions were made for its perpetual care, unlike the American Cemetery in Manila, which falls under the auspices of the American Battle Monuments Commission; and

WHEREAS, in June 1994, upon deciding the Clark Veterans Cemetery was a disgrace, VFW Post 2485 organized a general cleanup of the entire cemetery with volunteers from all local area veterans' organizations; and

WHEREAS, in November 1994, VFW Post 2485 signed a Memorandum of Agreement (renewed in 2005 for 25 years) with the Clark Development Corporation — the Philippine government entity responsible for the former Air Base — to operate and maintain the Clark Veterans Cemetery, which also allowed for the resumption of burials for qualified veterans. That responsibility continues today, and at great expense and effort, with no U.S. federal assistance; now, therefore

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that we call upon the United States Government to reassume full operational control of the Clark Veterans Cemetery in the Philippines.

The intent of this resolution is:

To call upon the United States Government to reassume full operational control of the Clark Veterans Cemetery in the Philippines.
(Approved)

Resolution No. 432 (Submitted by the Department of Texas)

RESOLUTION TO AMEND THE UNIFORMED SERVICE FORMER SPOUSES PROTECTION ACT

WHEREAS, the retired reserves of the Uniformed Services of the United States have been, are, and will remain a vital part of the defense of the United States; and

WHEREAS, members of Uniformed Services are allowed to retire – become a member of the retired reserve – with the permission of the service secretary only after meeting statutory requirements; and

WHEREAS, retired members of the Uniformed Service (military) legally remain members of their service, subject to recall and to the provisions of the Uniformed Code of Military Justice (UCMJ); and

WHEREAS, members of the retired reserve draw retirement/retainer pay only so long as they remain de facto and de jure qualified for further service; and

WHEREAS, the Supreme Court of the United States in the case of *McCarty v. McCarty* (1981) determined that the retirement is not a marital asset divisible in a divorce, holding that military retainer (retirement) pay belongs to the retiree in consideration for continued service to the nation; and

WHEREAS, the United States Congress passed the Uniformed Services Former Spouses Protection Act (USFSPA) Pub. L 97-252, in direct response to the *McCarty* decision; and

WHEREAS, in spite of the reasoned opinion of the Court, the USFSPA authorizes state courts to consider military retainer pay as marital property in a divorce and requires the uniformed services pay centers to pay up to half of the pay to the former spouse in direct payments upon a court order; and

WHEREAS, military retainer pay is considered to be ‘income’ for all other federal purposes except for property division in a divorce action; and

WHEREAS, although the USFSPA contains a number of conditions and restrictions on the ability of state courts to divide this pay, there is no federal enforcement mechanism to ensure the state courts correctly or

equitably employ this mechanism; and

WHEREAS, military retirees often develop service-connected well after retirement and then become eligible for disability benefits in lieu of military retirement pay on a dollar-for-dollar basis; and

WHEREAS, state courts have used the USFSPA authority to circumvent other federal statutes, such as 38 USC § 5301, designed to protect a disabled military retiree from loss of disability benefits to any creditor; and

WHEREAS, military retirement pay has no present-day value that is suitable for a one-time division in a divorce property settlement but instead is a statutory entitlement paid at a rate specified by law from year to year and must be paid monthly to a former spouse, prolonging the pain of a divorce to a military retiree; and

WHEREAS, former spouses are paid regularly, for LIFE, under the authority of the USFSPA, regardless of the fact that many remarry or are/become financially independent without such payments; and

WHEREAS, state courts have sufficient authority under each state's laws to order amounts to be paid to a former spouse to ensure that he/she will not be destitute; and

WHEREAS, those amounts paid to a former spouse under USFSPA often exceed what a state court could ever award under a state's alimony payment provisions; and

WHEREAS, alimony is a temporary payment that is subject to periodic review or upon a change in financial status of either party while USFSPA payments are almost never reviewed; and

WHEREAS, the USFSPA was a 1980s era law designed to redress a problem where male senior officers could 'jettison' a faithful (career-supportive) wife after many years and still keep retirement pay; and

WHEREAS, the provisions of the USFSPA are applied 'pro-forma' by state courts and regularly do not allow state court judges to craft equitable and just settlements in military member divorces; and

WHEREAS, the USFSPA contains provisions to ensure that the former spouse is also paid child support in addition to a 'share' of the military retirement pay, no such provisions similarly protect a military member who has custody of minor children to ensure child support payments; and

WHEREAS, the USFSPA therefore has a disparate impact on female retirees, who are often minorities; and

WHEREAS, former restrictions on work for spouses have disappeared and substantial legislative and Department of Defense actions have resulted in substantially increased support of spouse careers so that a spouse's professional life is no long negatively affected by the military service of a

family member; and

WHEREAS, the USFSPA no longer serves the purposes for which it was created, changing social values and demographics of the uniformed services have made the USFSPA an anachronism; and

WHEREAS, the USFSPA encourages divorce and the break-up of family life for our nation's veterans; and

WHEREAS, the federal courts have been reluctant to address this issue, believing it to be a matter for Congress to readdress; and

WHEREAS, the U.S. retirement system for members of the Uniformed Services is unique and incomparable to any other system because it provides for a trained reserve of personnel for national crises and honors those who have served the nation often under arduous conditions for a major portion of their productive lives; now, therefore

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that we implore the United States Congress to amend the Uniformed Services Former Spouses Protection Act, codified at 10 USC § 1408.

The intent of this resolution is:

To implore the United States Congress to amend the Uniformed Services Former Spouses Protection Act, codified at 10 USC § 1408.
(Rejected for R412)

RESOLUTIONS CONSIDERED BY COMMITTEE ON VETERANS SERVICE

Resolution No. 601 (Submitted by Commander-in-Chief)

ADEQUATE DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS BUDGET

WHEREAS, there are about 22.2 million living veterans; and

WHEREAS, more than 2.1 million men and women have served in Operations Iraqi and Enduring Freedom (OIF/OEF) through May 2010; and

WHEREAS, more than 552,000 OEF/OIF veterans have been screened for possible mild traumatic brain injury (TBI) while 103,000 veterans screened positive for the effects of TBI; and

WHEREAS, nearly 370,000 veterans of OIF/OEF have been treated for psychiatric symptoms or disorders; and

WHEREAS, many of the over 9 million veterans over 65 years old required increased health care including long-term care; and

WHEREAS, the laws administered by the Department of Veterans

Affairs authorizing benefits for veterans, their dependents and survivors are classified into the following general categories: compensation for service-connected disabilities and death; pension for low income veterans and survivors; educational and training assistance; home loan guaranty's; service members life insurance; veterans life insurance; hospital and medical care services; nursing home and domiciliary care, including state veterans home construction funds; health manpower training; medical and prosthetic research and burial benefits; and

WHEREAS, the health care delivery facilities of the Department of Veterans Affairs are aging physical plants in need of modernization through renovations and reconfiguration to meet the demands of advances in medicine and current fire, safety and privacy standards; and

WHEREAS, veterans who served in our armed forces have rendered honorable service to our great nation and are at a minimum deserving to receive timely and accurate processing of claims for veterans entitlements along with the best and most appropriate health care; now, therefore

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States that we urge the Congress of the United States authorize appropriations for the Department of Veterans Affairs which fully fund and maintain the integrity and enhancement of veteran entitlement programs and health care system. (Approved)

Resolution No. 602 (Submitted by Commander-in-Chief)

CONSIDER TREATMENT FOR A PRESUMPTIVE SERVICE CONNECTED CONDITION AS A CLAIM FOR VA COMPENSATION

WHEREAS, many service members have suffered from diseases that are recognized to be presumptive; and

WHEREAS, veterans suffering from diseases which include many types of cancer, as well as diabetes and other chronic diseases may not be aware that they may be eligible for service connection, even if they are being treated in a VA facility; and

WHEREAS, many VA medical facilities are not currently staffed or equipped to provide appropriate counseling to veterans or their families on how to file a claim for service connected benefits; now, therefore

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that we urge Congress to enact legislation requiring that treatment by the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) for a condition or disease recognized as presumptively service connected will be considered to be an informal claim for service connection for compensation purposes. (Approved)

Resolution No. 603 (Submitted by Commander-in-Chief)

EXTENDING GULF WAR PRESUMPTIONS, REGISTRY AND HEALTH CARE TO AFGHANISTAN THEATER VETERANS

WHEREAS, many service members have served in Operation Enduring Freedom; and

WHEREAS, these veterans have served under circumstances similar to those serving in Operation Iraqi Freedom, Operation New Dawn, and the first Persian Gulf War; and

WHEREAS, Afghanistan was not considered part of the Southwest Asia theater of operations during Operation Desert Storm and the VA did not include Afghanistan; now, therefore

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that we urge Congress and the VA to include Afghanistan in the Southwest Asia theater of operations so that appropriate benefits, including eligibility for compensation based on undiagnosed illnesses, and medical care eligibility, will be provided, retroactive to the beginning of Operation Enduring Freedom. (Approved)

Resolution No. 604 (Submitted by Commander-in-Chief)

OPPOSE VA PHARMACEUTICAL CO-PAYMENT INCREASES

WHEREAS, veterans, other than those with a service-connected disability rating of 50 percent or greater, those who are receiving medications for their service-connected conditions or those whose incomes fall below the non service-connected pension threshold, must pay a co-payment for each 30-day supply of medications obtained through the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA); and

WHEREAS, there have been repeated proposals to raise the pharmaceutical co-payment, placing an undue hardship on many veterans; and

WHEREAS, in 2010, the Secretary of Veterans Affairs, using his statutory authority, raised the pharmaceutical co-payment from \$8 to \$9 for each 30 day supply for priority groups 7 and 8, and authority to raise it again in the future exists; and

WHEREAS, the increase in costs of the benefit would likely cause many veterans to turn away from the VA health care system and would serve to inequitably balance the federal budget through veterans programs; and

WHEREAS, pharmaceuticals are part of the VA's standard health benefits package and must be provided to all eligible veterans; now, therefore

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that we oppose increases in the VA pharmaceutical co-payment. (Approved)

Resolution No. 605 (Submitted by Commander-in-Chief)

NURSING HOME ELIGIBILITY

WHEREAS, the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States has called upon Congress to enact legislation to regulate and expand eligibility for VA health care and provide all veterans with mandated access to the full continuum of VA health care services which include nursing home care; and

WHEREAS, current VA regulations extend VA eligibility for nursing home care to those veterans who are service-connected at 70 percent or above or those seeking nursing home care for a service-connected disability; and

WHEREAS, the demand for VA nursing home care is increasing as the veteran population continues to age; and

WHEREAS, VA nursing home care units are VA hospital-based and provide an intensive and extensive level of nursing home care supported by the clinical specialties and other services within the host hospital; and

WHEREAS, VA nursing home care is considered the “safety net” for VA outpatient services such as residential care, respite care, hospital-based home care, adult day health care, homemaker/home health aid services and other extended care programs; and

WHEREAS, VA, through their own statements, recognizes the difference in eligibility for nursing home care and inpatient hospital care as inconsistent with the principles of sound medical practice, which support continuity of care for veterans; now, therefore

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that we urge Congress to establish a standard VA nursing home entitlement for all veterans. (Approved)

Resolution No. 606 (Submitted by Commander-in-Chief)

TRAUMATIC BRAIN INJURY HEALTH CARE

WHEREAS, almost 20 percent of combat casualties have sustained permanent brain damage due to Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI) while serving in Operations Iraqi Freedom, Enduring Freedom and New Dawn; and

WHEREAS, veterans with blast injuries, blunt trauma, motor vehicle accidents, and falls are at risk for TBI which often goes unrecognized; and

WHEREAS, even mildly injured TBI patients may have long-term mental and physical health consequences; and

WHEREAS, there has been universal recognition that veterans with

severe TBI will need a lifetime of intensive services to care for their injuries and many VA medical facilities are not currently staffed or equipped to provide the necessary and appropriate screening, or quality health care services to veterans suffering from TBI; now, therefore

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that we urge Congress to provide sufficient funding to the Department of Veterans Affairs to ensure that appropriate screening, diagnostic services, treatment and life-long case management services are available to every veteran suffering from TBI; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that we urge the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to increase research pertaining to, screening methods, diagnostic tools, and more effective treatments, such as hyperbaric oxygen therapy treatment, for traumatic brain injury patients to ensure that TBI veterans are receiving quality standardized treatment and rehabilitation care available. (Approved)

Resolution No. 607 (Submitted by Commander-in-Chief)

VETERANS EMPLOYMENT AND TRAINING PROGRAMS

WHEREAS, the Veterans of Foreign Wars recognizes that it is in the best interest of veterans to have a strong and viable veterans employment and training system dedicated to the interest of our nation's veterans; and

WHEREAS, Congress has recognized, through enacting the VOW to Hire Heroes Act, that veterans of all eras, especially recently separated service members, are finding it difficult to obtain meaningful employment and careers; and

WHEREAS, while there are certain employment and educational programs in place for veterans there is a great need for improvement in the quality, purpose, and accountability of these programs; and

WHEREAS, veteran employment programs need to have a proactive, long-term career focus versus an immediate and often low wage, job focus; and

WHEREAS, all veteran employment programs should conduct impact studies to assess their effectiveness in attaining and maintaining meaningful long-term employment for veterans. Programs need increased accountability, oversight, and acceptable performance measures to prove the effectiveness of the programs; now, therefore

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that we support viable and effective veterans employment and training systems, to include provisions of the VOW to Hire Heroes Act, which have necessary funding and capability to assist veterans in seeking and maintaining meaningful employment and re-employment opportunities;

and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that programs which are proven to be effective should have the necessary funding and personnel to fully assist veterans seeking employment and reemployment opportunities in both the public and private sectors; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that such programs must be held accountable for the effectiveness of the services provided and their funding should be adjusted to reflect their abilities in creating long-term meaningful careers for veterans. (Approved)

Resolution No. 608 (Submitted by Commander-in-Chief)

VA SERVICES FOR WOMEN VETERANS

WHEREAS, the number of women joining the armed forces of our country continues to increase every year; and

WHEREAS, women veterans comprise approximately eight percent of all users of VA health care services and women who are deployed are now playing extraordinary roles in military conflicts and are enrolling in VA at historic rates; and

WHEREAS, the number of enrolled women veterans is expected to double in the next two to four years making it essential that VA is staffed and equipped to meet their specific health care needs; and

WHEREAS, many VA facilities are not currently equipped to provide gender-specific health care services to include mental health professionals trained to provide counseling and care for Military Sexual Trauma (MST) and Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD); and

WHEREAS, many women veterans are unaware of their eligibility as veterans and often do not utilize VA for benefits or health care services; and

WHEREAS, Public Law 111-163 addressed many of these critical issues and identified the needs of female veterans, we still await the final report on barriers to care required by the legislation; now, therefore

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that we urge VA to increase priority given to women veterans, by increasing research funding specifically tailored to women veterans and by providing adequate mental health care services to include individuals trained to provide care for MST and PTSD; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that we urge VA to ensure that it has a full-time women veterans program manager at all VA medical centers and major clinics and to ensure necessary and gender-specific health care services are available to women veterans at all VA facilities; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that we urge the Secretary of Veteran Affairs to improve outreach and expand programs for women veterans to close critical gaps, allow women to choose their VA healthcare provider and offering a full-range of services designed to meet their current and future needs. (Approved)

Resolution No. 609 (Submitted by Commander-in-Chief)

EXTEND SERVICE CONNECTION PRESUMPTION
TO BLAST SURVIVORS

WHEREAS, the Global War on Terrorism has placed tens of thousands of service members in harm's way; and

WHEREAS, the nature of the conflict these men and women face is frequently guerrilla-style combat where the enemy is widely known to use improvised explosive devices (IEDs); and

WHEREAS, much of the attention has been focused on the apparent physical wounds, there are many unseen effects of blast trauma, which could include brain injuries, long-term hearing and balance issues, chronic pain, air embolisms, and injuries mistaken for personality disorders; and

WHEREAS, some effects associated with blast injuries may not become manifest immediately allowing the service member to return to the field, only to have their ability to fulfill their duty dramatically affected by the long-term effects of the blast; and

WHEREAS many injuries are difficult to diagnose and our men and women in uniform can suffer from these disabilities for many years after the blast; and

WHEREAS, a large number of veterans have been identified as having been evaluated or treated for a condition possibly related to a Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI) at a VA medical center from the start of OIF/OEF/OND; now, therefore

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that we urge Congress to approve a presumption of service connection for the conditions associated with Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI). (Approved)

Resolution No. 610 (Submitted by Commander-in-Chief)

VETERAN ENTREPRENEURSHIP

WHEREAS, several government reports indicate that the majority of federal agencies have failed to reach their three-percent contracting goal for disabled veterans; and

WHEREAS, many veterans and disabled veterans lack access to capital; and

WHEREAS, the federal government has failed to deliver adequate tools to veterans, offering the opportunity to fulfill the three-percent federal contracting mandate; and

WHEREAS, the Small Business Administration lacks the funding and staff necessary to create robust veterans programs; now, therefore

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars that Congress expand entrepreneurial education and networking programs for veterans via veterans small business centers funded through the Small Business Administration in order to help all government agencies reach the three-percent goal; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that Congress expand veteran's and disabled veteran's access to capital by creating and funding a direct loan program through the Small Business Administration in order to help all government agencies achieve the three-percent goal. (Approved)

Resolution No. 611 (Submitted by Commander-in-Chief)

ENSURE COMPLIANCE WITH THE DEPARTMENT OF LABOR (DOL)
TRANSITION ASSISTANCE PROGRAM PARTICIPATION MANDATE

WHEREAS, the goal of the Transition Assistance Program (TAP) is to ease the adjustment of separating service members during the difficult transition from active duty into civilian life by offering job-search assistance, medical/health services, the advising of available benefits, and other related counseling; and

WHEREAS, TAP pre-separation counseling was not always integrated into the Military Separation process for service members and not all military bases allow nationally accredited service organizations to participate in the pre-separation or TAP briefings; and

WHEREAS, the VOW to Hire Heroes Act mandated TAP participation in 2011 thanks to advocacy from the Veterans of Foreign Wars in response to Government Accountability Reports emphasizing the need for all eligible service members to attend TAP prior to discharge; now, therefore

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that DOD expands and standardizes their existing pre-separation counseling policies to ensure counseling services are utilized by separating service members and by adding additional information on the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) benefits, to include healthcare and entitlements, federal and private sector employment opportunities, G.I. Bill and vocational rehabilitation and employment programs, and to ensure that individual service members receive appropriate transitioning services, as mandated by the VOW to Hire Heroes Act; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the

United States, that we request Congress require DOL to thoroughly review the TAP program for maximum effectiveness in helping service members transition to civilian life and find real world jobs, while encouraging cooperation and inclusion of nationally accredited service organizations in their programs. (Approved)

Resolution No. 612 (Submitted by Commander-in Chief)

VA CLAIMS BACKLOG

WHEREAS, the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) has a backlog of 1.7 Million claims for compensation, pension, education benefits and appeals; and

WHEREAS, due to the increasing complexity of claims, the need for compliance to Court of Veterans Appeals decisions claims, and the continual increase in the number of claims received each year the backlog has continued to grow; and

WHEREAS, because of substantial backlogs of claims and appeals cases, timeliness in rating cases has steadily degraded; and

WHEREAS, VBA is only now beginning to leverage advances in information technology (IT) to create efficiencies that substantially streamline claims processing and enhance opportunities for improved quality control; and

WHEREAS, decades of staffing freezes and neglect within VA contributed to current backlogs and decreased timeliness; and

WHEREAS, Congress in recent years has provided increased funding for staffing at VA and improved oversight. Yet, the attrition of new hires and retirement of journeymen claims processors continues to challenge VA's ability to train and maintain a technically proficient workforce; and

WHEREAS, it is apparent that after decades of study, Congressional hearings, changes of VA leadership, altered workflow, amended work processes, sporadic IT development as well as countless pilot programs and experimental initiatives, it is clear that there are no easy, simple or quick solutions that lead to the rapid reduction of the backlog; now, therefore

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that we urge Congress to continue to exercise its oversight capacity and provide the resources necessary to hire, train and sustain a workforce sufficient to overcome the backlog and provide quality and timely service to those claiming benefits or appealing decisions from VA; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that Congress continues its oversight of VA IT initiatives to ensure that they are constructive, relevant and effective in streamlining claims processing and improving quality of entitlement decisions. (Approved)

Resolution No. 613 (Submitted by Commander-in-Chief)

INCREASE THE BENEFIT LEVEL FOR DEA

WHEREAS, the Survivors and Dependents Educational Assistance Program (DEA) provides educational support to eligible dependents (spouse or children) of a service member who died on active duty or a veteran who died or is permanently and totally disabled due to a service-connected disability; and

WHEREAS, while DEA benefits have not increased significantly since 2003, public four-year college tuition has increased by more than 40 percent; and

WHEREAS, the average cost of tuition, fees, and room and board at a four-year public university is estimated at \$19,620 for the 2011-2012 academic year, while the DEA benefit for the same period is \$8,613; and

WHEREAS, while nothing can repay the enormity of the loss and sacrifice of military survivors, providing a quality educational benefit will provide them the opportunity to build a meaningful and productive future for themselves and their children; now, therefore

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that we urge the Congress to increase DEA benefits to reflect the rising cost of education, and that the benefit should be indexed to reflect the level of tuition as reported by the Department of Education. (Approved)

Resolution No. 614 (Submitted by Commander-in-Chief)

PTSD HEALTH CARE

WHEREAS, the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) has indicated that treating Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) among returning war veterans is one of its highest priorities, and the VA operates a nationwide network of more than 190 specialized PTSD outpatient treatment programs; and

WHEREAS, the early and accurate screening, diagnosis and treatment for PTSD, depression, substance use, and other mental health disorders, yields optimal patient outcomes, and statistics have shown that these conditions, left untreated or poorly treated, can lead to increases in suicide attempts or suicides among a host of other negative consequences; and

WHEREAS, the total number of veterans compensated for PTSD through 2011 is over 474,600, and almost a third (approximately 172,000) are current war veterans; and

WHEREAS, on July 14, 2011, VA's Office of Inspector General testified before Congress that PTSD was the most common disability award component for both men and women who served in Iraq and Afghanistan;

and

WHEREAS, available research has not sufficiently evaluated the clinical effectiveness of treatment programs for veterans diagnosed with and/or suffering from the effects of traumatic brain injuries, PTSD, and adequate research into the brain's response to internal and external influences that could result in mental illness has yet to be undertaken; and

WHEREAS, VA has struggled to provide female veterans the same type of care and services that their male counterparts receive for TBI and PTSD; and

WHEREAS, the Institute of Medicine highlights prolonged exposure therapy, an intensive specialized counseling treatment as being one of the few treatment programs that have been proven effective by evidence based research studies; and

WHEREAS, because of cost concerns and the lack of expertise, VA currently does not have the capacity to deliver intensive exposure therapy programs at every medical center to veterans with PTSD who need it; and

WHEREAS, VA expects an increase in PTSD conditions as Veterans return from OEF/OIF/OND after multiple tours of duty; now therefore

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that we strongly urge the Department of Veterans Affairs to adequately staff VA mental health treatment and research programs; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that VA take the lead on improving women's health research, training and women's health certifications, and institute comprehensive programs for the treatment of PTSD among women veterans. (Approved)

Resolution No. 615 (Submitted by Commander-in-Chief)

TINNITUS AND HEARING LOSS PRESUMPTIVE SERVICE CONNECTION

WHEREAS, veterans of the armed services who served in combat or in a position (e.g. member of a gun crew on board Navy ships) or certain occupational specialties have a high incidence rate of hearing loss or tinnitus as a direct result of acoustic trauma; and

WHEREAS, many pre-service and discharge examinations, particularly for World War II and Korean Conflict veterans, were usually accomplished with the highly inaccurate whispered-voice test; and

WHEREAS, veterans, in those cases, were not afforded a comprehensive audio logical examination upon entrance and discharge from the military services; and

WHEREAS, in recent years the second leading disability granted service connection by VA was for hearing loss or tinnitus; and

WHEREAS, in 2005 the Institutes of Medicine (IOM) released a study that showed that nearly all service members are exposed to acoustic trauma at some point during their military service and that many experience hearing loss and/or tinnitus as a result, often years after service. However, “after the fact, hearing loss or tinnitus incurred as a result of military service cannot be distinguished with certainty from subsequent noise-induced hearing loss...” Given these findings, reasonable doubt must be resolved in favor of veterans who suffered acoustic trauma in service; now, therefore

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, we urge Congress and the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to grant service connection on a presumptive basis for any veteran diagnosed after discharge with hearing loss or tinnitus when the evidence shows that the veteran participated in combat or worked in a position or occupational specialty likely to cause acoustic trauma. (Approved as Amended)

Resolution No. 616 (Submitted by Commander-in-Chief)

ENFORCE VETERANS EMPLOYMENT LAW

WHEREAS, Congress enacted laws to help veterans find suitable employment; and

WHEREAS, federal contractors receive taxpayer money from the federal government to conduct business; and

WHEREAS, the Department of Labor has failed to provide any oversight to ensure that federal contractors are abiding by the laws required of them in regards to veterans, particularly Title 38 USC 4212; and

WHEREAS, many governmental departments have done a poor job in hiring veterans, particularly disabled veterans; and

WHEREAS, many veterans do not know how to appeal employment decisions when they believe their eligibility for preference was not properly considered; now, therefore

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that we urge Congress to hold the Department of Labor and federal contractors responsible for abiding by the law, particularly Title 38 USC 4212; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the VFW urges Congress to modify Title 38 USC 4212 to stipulate penalties for all federal contractors that are found to be in non-compliance of such section; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the VFW urges Congress to modify Title 38 USC 4212 to require that any information collected through the VETS-100—a required annual filing for federal contractors receiving over \$100,000 that lists the number of veterans they employ—be made available to the public and in a user friendly format for both veterans and those who assist veterans in locating employment; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the VFW urges Congress to hold regular hearings with governmental departments that have a poor record in hiring veterans, particularly disabled veterans, to highlight the issue and take necessary actions to discontinue such actions; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED; that all governmental agencies clearly supply information to veterans, at the time of their application for employment, which clearly identifies the proper procedure for filing complaints should any veteran believe his or her rights have been violated under any law or regulation related to veterans' preference. (Approved)

Resolution No. 617 (Submitted by Commander-in-Chief)

BURIAL PLOT ALLOWANCE

WHEREAS, the United States Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) pays certain burial benefits at the death of a veteran who dies from a service connected disability. VA pays a different burial benefit and plot allowance on behalf of a wartime veteran who dies from a non-service connected condition; and

WHEREAS, the cost of funeral expenses in the private sector have increased nearly seven times over since 2001 and the current VA benefit is \$2,000 for a service connected death, and \$700 burial and \$700 plot allowance for a qualifying non-service connected death; well below the cost in the private sector; and

WHEREAS, Congress should provide the resources to meet the changing needs of burial benefits and bring burial allowances and plot allowances to the same proportionate level they were when the benefits were joined in 1973; now, therefore

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that Congress increase all burial benefits to what the Independent Budget recommends: the service connected burial benefit, non-service connected burial benefit and the plot allowance should be \$6,160, \$1,918, and \$1,150 respectively; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that Congress should provide the resources required to meet burial needs of all veterans who have served their country so honorably and faithfully. (Rejected)

Resolution No. 618 (Submitted by Commander-in-Chief)

HEARING LOSS COMPENSATION

WHEREAS, veterans of the armed services who served in combat have a high incident rate of hearing loss usually associated with acoustical trauma; and

WHEREAS, in the practice of granting disability compensation there is a long-standing precedent that ratings not be offset by the function artificially restored by prosthesis; and

WHEREAS, the Department of Veterans Affairs has the authority to grant service connection for disabilities associated with combat-related diseases or injuries even if medically undocumented at the time of service; and

WHEREAS, many veterans have incurred extreme hardships through undocumented acoustic trauma related to combat service or occupational duty; and

WHEREAS, hearing aids are considered a prosthetic device necessary for good quality of life; now, therefore

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that we urge the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to amend the Schedule for Rating Disabilities to provide a minimum compensable evaluation for any service connected hearing loss for which a hearing aid is medically indicated. (Approved)

Resolution No. 619 (Submitted by the Commander-in-Chief)

REPEAL SBP/DIC OFFSET

WHEREAS, under current law, the surviving spouse of a retired servicemember whose death is related to a military service connected condition is entitled to Dependency and Indemnity Compensation (DIC) benefits from the Department of Veterans Affairs; and

WHEREAS, if the military retiree was also enrolled in the Survivors Benefit Plan (SBP), the surviving spouse's SBP benefit would be offset by the amount of DIC benefits provided by VA; and

WHEREAS, the 2008 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) included a provision that provided a \$10 increase each year for survivors of members entitled to retired pay whose SBP is reduced by VA and the 2009 NDAA extended this payment to survivors of active duty deaths, neither benefit equals the amount being offset by DIC; and

WHEREAS, SBP and DIC payments are paid to beneficiaries for different reasons: SBP is purchased by the retiree like life insurance and is intended to provide a portion of the veteran's retired pay to the surviving spouse after the veteran's death, and DIC is a special indemnity compensation benefit paid to the surviving spouse when the veteran's service connected

condition caused the premature demise of the retiree; and

WHEREAS, a surviving spouse of a federal civilian retiree who is a disabled veteran and dies from military service connected causes can receive DIC benefits without losing any of their SBP benefits due to an offset; now, therefore

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that we urge Congress to repeal the Survivor's Benefit Plan and Dependency and Indemnity Compensation offset. (Approved)

Resolution No. 620 (Submitted by Commander-in-Chief)

INCIDENT REPORTING AND HEALTH CARE FOR MST

WHEREAS, allegations of sexual assault in the military remains a concern, even though steps have been taken to encourage prevention efforts and field reporting, as well as stronger managerial oversight; and

WHEREAS, Department of Defense (DOD) incident numbers indicate that 5.3 percent of all service members report allegations of sexual trauma; and

WHEREAS, a civilian panel that advises top Pentagon officials on matters related to Military Sexual Trauma (MST) found that sexual assault victims fear embarrassment, lack of action by authorities, retaliation and career penalties as a result of reporting incidents, and many refuse to answer screening questions if it means their record will reflect that they were assaulted or raped; and

WHEREAS, many survivors of MST often develop Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) and current treatment strategies are often inadequate because they are generally tailored to the treatment of combat-induced PTSD and thus fail to provide the appropriate treatment environment survivors require; and

WHEREAS, evidence suggests that gender-specific inpatient and outpatient care facilities, including gender-specific housing, established for the treatment of veterans suffering from MST and PTSD resulting from MST lead to higher rates of recovery as compared to co-ed treatment centers targeted at combat-induced trauma; and

WHEREAS, VA has begun providing specialized MST programs, but needs to provide more outreach about the facilities that offer this service as many veterans are unaware of the specialized programs available; now, therefore

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that we urge VA and DOD to ensure that necessary and appropriate health care services are available to all veterans who experience MST, to include,

confidential counseling and other treatment options, and additional gender-specific facilities for the treatment of conditions resulting from MST amongst the veteran population; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the current assessment and treatment process for sexual trauma be conducted in a way that will convince members of the armed forces and veterans that the process protects the confidentiality of survivors and assures that appropriate investigations and disciplinary actions will be taken against the perpetrator; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that DOD must continue to aggressively support a zero-tolerance policy for sexual assault, and provide educational programs aimed at the prevention of, response to, and the reducing of stigmas associated with sexual assault during initial training and pre-deployment. (Approved)

Resolution No. 621 (Submitted by Commander-in-Chief)

HOMELESS VETERANS PRIORITIES

WHEREAS, despite a severe economic recession, homelessness among veterans has significantly decreased due to coordinated efforts across multiple agencies of government and the ambitious goals of President Obama and Secretary Shinseki to eliminate homelessness among veterans by 2015; and

WHEREAS, solving this problem has become more challenging as the number of female service members has increased within the military, as it has resulted in a growing number of female veterans experiencing homelessness, many of whom have dependents in their care; and

WHEREAS, programs operating on the federal level seek to assist local and state homeless veteran agencies and programs, partially using funds granted by the Department of Veteran Affairs (VA) Grant and Per Diem program and the Department of Labor (DOL) Homeless Veterans Reintegration program; and

WHEREAS, recently implemented programs such as VA's Supportive Services for Veteran Families (SSVF) and the joint Housing and Urban Development and VA's Supportive Housing (HUD-VASH) program are showing signs of success in not only reducing homelessness, but also in providing desperately-needed case management and other measures to prevent homelessness; and

WHEREAS, the VA acknowledges its obligation to maintain comprehensive assistance to veterans who are experiencing homelessness or at risk of homelessness to the best of its capabilities; now, therefore

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that we urge the President and Congress to continue addressing homeless veterans as a priority by increasing the availability of affordable housing,

ensuring the opportunity to earn an adequate income through increased educational and employment opportunities and training, and by expanding access to health-care services; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that Congress should fully-fund all veteran homeless programs, to include the VA's Grant and Per Diem program, and DOL's Homeless Veterans Reintegration program; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the VA should periodically review the economy so as to take into account instances of inflation to adequately adjust Grant and Per Diem program rates as necessary for sufficient operation of homeless veteran assistance programs; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that VA programs extended to homeless veterans be equipped with the staffing and resources necessary to respond to the growing needs of a diverse veterans population, including women, dependents, the elderly, and disabled; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that preemptive measures to address homelessness are developed and utilized to prevent and minimize the risk of possible homelessness that current service members and veterans face; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that Department of Veterans Affairs service connected compensation and non-service connected pension not be considered as countable income by the Department of Housing and Urban Development. (Approved)

Resolution No. 622 (Submitted by Commander-in-Chief)

VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION AND EMPLOYMENT PROGRAM ELIGIBILITY

WHEREAS, the period of eligibility for VA Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment (VR&E) benefits is 12 years from the date of separation from the military or the date the veteran was first notified by VA of a service-connected disability rating; and

WHEREAS, many veterans do not understand their eligibility to VR&E services and the benefits of the program until later in life when they become so disabled that their disabilities create an employment barrier; and

WHEREAS, VR&E lacks quality performance measures that measure rehabilitation based on the long-term effects of disability and the likelihood that a disability may require further rehabilitation; and

WHEREAS, VR&E can take more than 90 days from enrollment to the start of services; now, therefore

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States,

that we urge Congress to change the eligibility delimiting date for VA Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment program by eliminating the 12-year-delimiting date for eligibility to Chapter 31 benefits and allow all veterans with employment impediments or problems with independent living to qualify for VR&E services for life; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the VA must restructure performance measures to emphasize long-term rehabilitation versus the current short-term indicators of success. Furthermore, VR&E should continually follow up with veterans considered to be rehabilitated to ensure that the rehabilitation and employment placement plans have been successful; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that VA streamlines eligibility and entitlement to VR&E programs to provide more timely intervention and assistance to all disabled veterans. (Approved)

Resolution No. 623 (Submitted by Commander-in-Chief)

VETERANS PREFERENCE – JOB TRAINING

WHEREAS, the U.S. Department of Labor (DOL) and the Veterans Employment and Training Service Centers must meet mandatory compliance standards for veterans preference; and

WHEREAS, the Job Service Centers for each State and Territory receive funding under the Wagner – Peyser Act of 1933; and, are eligible for special grants to provide services to veterans; and

WHEREAS, the January 2009 mandate, authorized by changes in law stating, “any Department of Labor workforce development, job training, or placement programs must provide priority to veterans,” is not being met at all career one-stop locations; and

WHEREAS, the president instituted a veterans’ “Gold Card” initiative to further reinforce priority service for veterans at DOL career one-stops; now, therefore

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that we urge Congress to ensure that all agencies that are provided funds from the U.S. Department of Labor, or that receive funding under the Wagner – Peyser Act or Workforce Investment Act meet the same compliance standards as the State Workforce agencies relative to Veterans Preference, as mandated by current law; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that these same agencies be required to provide compliance reports to the office of the Assistant Secretary of Veterans Employment and Training or their designee to ensure this mandate is carried out. (Approved)

Resolution No. 624 (Submitted by Commander-in-Chief)

VETERANS AFFAIRS PENSION MANAGEMENT CENTERS

WHEREAS, the Pension Management Centers were established in 2001; and

WHEREAS, the Pension Management Centers are tasked with the processing responsibilities for live and death pension applications and Dependency and Indemnity Compensation; and

WHEREAS, this tasking is not being accomplished in a timely, accurate manner; and

WHEREAS, the Veterans Affairs Office of Inspector General Office of Audits and Evaluations conducted a review of the Pension Management Centers dated March 30, 2011 which revealed untimely processing of original death pension claims and Internal Revenue Service and Social Security Administration Income Verification Matches; and

WHEREAS, the veterans and dependents who depend on the benefits being overseen by the Pension Management Center are those individuals most in need; now, therefore

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that we express our concerns about the services being delivered by the Pension Management Center and urge the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to return control of all pension claims to the original VA regional office of jurisdiction. (Approved)

Resolution No. 625 (Submitted by Commander-in-Chief)

MAKE VA FEE BASIS PAYMENTS AND CHAMPVA PAYMENTS FAIR TO PROVIDERS

WHEREAS, the fees paid under the VA Fee Basis and CHAMPVA medical insurance to providers of medical services is not equal to the fees paid by private insurance; and

WHEREAS, these reimbursement rates are subject to a pending rate cut of over 30% under the Balanced Budget Act of 1997; and

WHEREAS, fees to doctors providing care for beneficiaries of the various Department of Defense TRICARE programs are also subject to this reduction; and

WHEREAS, many private medical providers will not accept Fee Basis, CHAMPVA, and TriCare because of the inequity of payment; and

WHEREAS, the government plans are the only insurance that many 100% disabled and retired military personnel have and the proposed reductions will prevent veterans and their dependents from adequate medical treatment and care; now, therefore

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that we support legislation and regulations requiring that Fee Basis, CHAMPVA, TriCare and other plans providing medical care for retired and disabled veterans be kept competitive with private insurance providers. (Approved)

Resolution No. 626 (Submitted by Commander-in-Chief)

SUPPORT PROPER FUNDING FOR DVOPS/LVERS

WHEREAS, Veterans Preference and Priority of Service for veterans have been earned by the sacrifices of men and women who have served in the military and protected our inalienable rights and nation; and

WHEREAS, Title 38 U.S. Code changed the Disabled Veterans' Outreach Program (DVOP) and Local Veterans' Employment Representative (LVER) Grants from staffing grants to performance grants; and

WHEREAS, many States have decreased the actual staff to provide services to veterans and provide veterans' preference by 50% or more; and

WHEREAS, legislation currently before Congress seeks to overhaul how all Department of Labor one-stops and veterans' priority programs, including DVOPS/LVERS, are financed; now, therefore

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans' of Foreign Wars of the United States, that we support legislation that would return DVOP and LVER funding to a staffing grant; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that we support action that would require the Congress through the appropriate Secretary to ensure that adequate funding be provided to support adequate DVOPS/LVERS staff within states to provide services to all veterans' requiring employment and training assistance residing within the state; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that we urge Congress to oppose any changes in law that could potentially cut or divert funding for veterans' employment programs and services, like DVOPS/LVERS, instituted by the appropriate Department. (Approved)

Resolution No. 627 (Submitted by Commander-in-Chief)

QUALITY EDUCATIONAL OUTCOMES

WHEREAS, our nation has consistently supported the future success of our warfighters through robust veterans' education benefits, historically molding generations of proven leaders; and

WHEREAS, the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States helped secure modern war-time education benefits for today's veterans through the passage of the Post-9/11 G.I. Bill; and

WHEREAS, recent Senate investigations indicate that certain schools fail to confer relevant credentials for their student-veterans; and

WHEREAS, VA plans to enroll more than one million veterans across all G.I. Bill programs in 2012, but does not have adequate resources to inform veterans of their educational options; now, therefore

BE IT RESOLVED, that the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States urge Congress to ensure proper oversight of VA's educational benefit programs, enacting legislation to ensure that student-veterans receive the quality educational opportunities they have earned and can take action should they become victims of fraud, waste or abuse. (Approved)

Resolution No. 628 (Submitted by Commander-in-Chief)

SUPPORT VETERANS TREATMENT COURTS

WHEREAS, the first Veterans Treatment Court was created in Buffalo, N.Y., in January 2008 by Judge Robert Russell, who saw firsthand the transformative power of military camaraderie when veterans on his staff assisted another veteran who had appeared before one of his drug treatment courts; and

WHEREAS, recognizing that more could be done judicially, he asked his local VA Medical Center and volunteer veterans to join in creating a new program that would focus exclusively on ensuring veterans who appeared in his court for nonviolent offenses were connected to their earned VA services and benefits, and with mentors who understood military service and the difficulties some might have adjusting to civilian society; and

WHEREAS, a Veterans Treatment Court judge handles numerous veterans' cases and is supported by a strong, interdisciplinary team. This judge is in a much better position to exercise discretion and effectively respond than someone who only occasionally hears a case involving a veteran. A Veterans Treatment Court judge better understands the issues that a veteran may be struggling with, such as substance addiction, Post-Traumatic Stress, Traumatic Brain Injury or Military Sexual Trauma. A Veterans Treatment Court judge is also more familiar with the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, their respective state public and private support agencies, and local Veterans Service Organizations, who are the strength behind the mentorship programs; and

WHEREAS, a Veterans Treatment Court eliminates the "no one understands me" excuse and replaces it with peer pressure from fellow veterans to successfully complete the court mandated treatment programs; and

WHEREAS, there are now 96 Veterans Treatment Courts in 24 states—with hundreds more being planned—because the concept works; now, therefore

BE IT RESOLVED, the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States strongly supports ongoing judicial initiatives to create Veterans Treatment Courts in all 2,500 of the nation's drug courts; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that we encourage VFW members to volunteer as mentors to their local Veterans Treatment Courts. (Approved)

Resolution No. 629 (Submitted by the Department of Connecticut)

POST TRAUMATIC STRESS

WHEREAS, many of our deployed United States Uniformed Service Members serve in combat and other extremely stressful areas and jobs; and

WHEREAS, service in those areas can create an adverse physiological impact on those serving; and

WHEREAS, the Department of Veterans Affairs has chosen to label that malady as "Post Traumatic Stress Disorder"; and

WHEREAS, the term Disorder is described in Webster's Dictionary as: "a lack of order; confusion, the disruption of peaceful and law-abiding behavior. Medicine a disruption of normal physical or mental functions" all indicating abnormal and possibly violent behavior on the part of those afflicted; and

WHEREAS, that condition must be reported on any forms for life and other types of insurance, job, drivers license and other types of related applications, casting an adverse and negative shadow on the applicant for something he/she did not create; now, therefore

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that we strongly urge the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to remove the word "Disorder" from the description of that malady, and simply refer to it as "Post Traumatic Stress". (Rejected)

Resolution No. 630 (Submitted by the Department of Utah)

PROHIBIT CHARGING FEES TO REPRESENT VETERANS BEFORE THE DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS (VA)

WHEREAS, the VFW and other veterans organizations have Service Officers who assist veterans and their families for free in filing claims for veterans' benefits; and

WHEREAS, there are now individuals or organizations who are charging as much as \$2,000 to assist veterans in filing claims for veterans benefits' in areas such as pension and aid and attendance; and

WHEREAS, these groups are taking advantage of veterans and their families and turning this assistance into a profit center; and

WHEREAS, these groups often mislead veterans and claim expedited or special access to VA claims processing personnel service; and

WHEREAS, these groups advise veterans to make questionable transfers of their assets in order to qualify for benefits; and

WHEREAS, these actions may cause veterans to incur overpayments or become ineligible for the benefit; and

WHEREAS, 38 U.S.C. §5904(c)(1) specifically states “a fee may not be charged, allowed, or paid for services of agents and attorneys with respect to services provided before the date on which the Board of Veterans’ Appeals first makes a final decision in the case; now, therefore

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that we go on record encouraging Congress to impose civil and criminal penalties for individuals or organizations violating this law. (Approved as Amended)

Resolution No. 631 (Submitted by the Department of Missouri)

SERVICE CONNECTION AFTER 180 DAYS

WHEREAS, all enlistees in the United States Military are screened with an extensive medical screening; and

WHEREAS, all medical problems at entry are required to be noted in a member’s records; and

WHEREAS, all military members are trained in Basic Training, Officer Training School, MIMSO, or through a ROTC program. Almost all members are further trained through some formal technical school or leadership program. During training, all individuals are under close supervision and under the scrutiny of training professionals who have the opportunity to notice and identify significant medical or mental problems; and

WHEREAS, the U.S. military has had numerous chances to ascertain medical and mental problems present in a combat bound member; now, therefore

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that all conditions not identified before the 180 day in service mark should be considered as either occurring during service or aggravated through service. A service member has been vested in his status as a 100% able bodied warrior; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that no conditions may be rejected as a “Pre-existing condition” on a VA claim unless identified before 180 days or before combat; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that all previous VA claims rejected as “Pre-existing condition” should be re-evaluated under these conditions. (Rejected)

Resolution No. 632 (Submitted by the Department of Michigan)

HEADSTONE AND MARKER MEDALLION

WHEREAS, Public Law 110-157, signed into law on December 26, 2007 gives the VA authority to “furnish, upon request, a medallion or other device of a design determined by the Secretary to signify the deceased’s status as a veteran, to be attached to a headstone or marker that was furnished at private expense”; and

WHEREAS, veterans who died prior to November 1, 1990, are not eligible to have this medallion or other device provided; and

WHEREAS, family headstones or monuments often do not necessarily commemorate the veteran’s military service; and

WHEREAS, many of our honored deceased veterans now lie in their final resting place without lasting testimony by our government of their service to our country; and

WHEREAS, we believe this injustice to our nation’s veterans must be corrected; now, therefore

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that we support amending Public Law 110-157 to allow the Department of Veterans Affairs to furnish a medallion or other device notwithstanding the fact that the veteran did die prior to November 1, 1990. (Approved)

Resolution No. 633 (Moved to 432)

Resolution No. 634 (Submitted by the Department of West Virginia)

TO ELIMINATE THE VA TIME REQUIREMENT FOR A VETERAN TO BE RATED 100% FOR DEPENDENCY INDEMNITY COMPENSATION

WHEREAS, the goal of this resolution is to encourage the United States Congress to change the eligibility provision of the law pertaining to Dependency Indemnity Compensation for widows, children and parents of veterans who are rated as 100% Service Connected disabled at the time of death; and

WHEREAS, current law is discriminatory in that a Veteran rated 100% Service Connected disabled from date of discharge from active duty is only required to have been rated 100% continuously for 5 years in order for the dependents to be eligible for death benefits; and

WHEREAS, a veteran who is rated 100% Service Connected anytime

after discharge from active duty is required to be rated 100% 10 continuous years to enable the dependents to be eligible for Dependents Indemnity Compensation. There should not be a length of time required; now, therefore

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that all veterans who are rated as 100% for service incurred disabilities should be treated equally. That the law should be amended so that - all veterans who are rated 100% because of service incurred disabilities are treated the same and to remove the discrimination that now exists; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the members of the organization approving this resolution requests the Congress to eliminate the requirements that a veteran be rated 100% for a certain period of time and approve the granting of Dependency Indemnity Compensation to qualified dependents where the veteran is rated 100% from Service connected causes since it can be assumed that the veterans health affected life expectancy; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that those claims previously denied because of the time limits, be reviewed and death benefits granted where eligible. (Approved)

Resolution No. 635 (Submitted by the Department of Montana)

ENFORCE THE ORIGINAL "HEALTH CARE ELIGIBILITY ACT OF 1996"

WHEREAS, the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States has always believed in the principle, and fought for the proposition, that a veteran earned his/her right to veterans' benefits from their honorable service to his/her Country during time of war or national emergency; and

WHEREAS, in 1996 Congress passed the "Health Care Eligibility Act" whereby for the first time all veterans, regardless of wartime injury, wealth, or income, would with honorable service to his/her Country in time of war or national emergency, would qualify for health care with the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA); and

WHEREAS, hundreds of thousands of veterans across the country applied for this special veterans benefit which was applied to the Table of Priority Groups as "Priority 8"; and,

WHEREAS, due to the failure of the Department of Veterans Affairs to plan for this huge influx of veterans seeking medical help from the VA; and/ or Congress refusing to fund this new army of veterans seeking care at the VA facilities around the country, we found by the year 2002, as many as 300,000 veterans awaiting care at VA facilities; and

WHEREAS, in 2003 the Secretary of Veterans Affairs, chose to stop Priority Group 8 veterans from receiving VA health care, and capped enrollment; and

WHEREAS, President Obama, while still a U.S. Senator, declared before a hearing of the Senate Veterans Committee that he favored giving all honorable discharged veterans access to VA hospital services; and

WHEREAS, all the men and women who gave this Country their service in time of war and national emergency, must have equal access to receive VA medical care with their comrades in order to satisfy minimum care standards under the Affordable Care Act; now, therefore

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that we urge the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to reverse the 2003 order and allow all "Group 8" veterans access to care in VA facilities; and open registration to all eligible veterans to VA health care, if they so choose to join; that if the Secretary refuses said request the Commander-in-Chief shall make the same request of the President of the United States. (Approved as Amended)

Resolution No. 636 (Submitted by the Department of Montana)

MINIMUM COMPENSATION FOR HEARING LOSS

WHEREAS, veterans of the armed services who served in combat have a high incident rate of hearing loss usually associated with acoustical trauma; and

WHEREAS, it is the general principle of disability compensation that ratings not be offset by the function artificially restored by prosthesis; and

WHEREAS, the Department of Veterans Affairs has the authority to grant service connection for disabilities associated with combat-related disease or injuries even if medically undocumented at the time of service; and

WHEREAS, many veterans have incurred extreme hardships through undocumented acoustical trauma related to combat service or occupational duty; and

WHEREAS, hearing aids are considered a prosthetic device necessary for good quality of life; now, therefore

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States that we urge the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to amend the Schedule for Rating Disabilities to provide a minimum compensable evaluation for any service connected hearing loss for which a hearing aid is medically indicated. (Rejected)

Resolution No. 637 (Submitted by the Department of Montana)

PRESUMPTIVE SERVICE CONNECTION FOR TINNITUS AND HEARING LOSS

WHEREAS, veterans of the armed services who served in combat or in a position (e.g. member of a gun crew on board Navy ships) or certain occupational specialties have a high incident rate of hearing loss or tinnitus as a direct result of acoustic trauma; and

WHEREAS, many pre-service and discharge examinations, particularly for World War II and Korean conflict veterans, were usually accomplished with the highly inaccurate whispered-voice test; and

WHEREAS, veterans, in those cases, were not afforded a comprehensive audio logical examination upon entrance and discharge from the military service; and

WHEREAS, in recent years the second leading disability granted service connection by VA was for hearing loss or tinnitus; and

WHEREAS, in 2005 the Institutes of Medicine (IOM) released a study that showed that nearly all service members are exposed to acoustic trauma at some point during military service and that many experience hearing loss and/or tinnitus as a result, often years after service. However, "after the fact, hearing loss or tinnitus incurred as a result of military service cannot be distinguished with certainty from subsequent noise-induced hearing loss...", given these findings, reasonable doubt must be resolved in favor of veterans who suffered acoustic trauma in service; now, therefore

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, we urge the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to grant service connection on a presumptive basis for any veteran diagnosed after discharge with hearing loss or tinnitus when the evidence shows that the veteran participated in combat or worked in a position or occupational specialty likely to cause acoustic trauma. (Rejected)

Resolution No. 638 (Submitted by the Department of Minnesota)

VA PROSTHETICS

WHEREAS, the VA has nationally allowed the Prosthetics Department at each VA Medical Center to purchase prosthetics as needed for each individual veteran; and

WHEREAS, this policy has been changed to transfer that responsibility to the business office at each facility; and

WHEREAS, this transfer of responsibility no longer assures each veteran of getting the best prosthetics for his particular need; now, therefore

BE IT RESOLVED by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that this change be revoked and the responsibility of prescribing and purchasing prosthetics for our veterans be returned to the Prosthetic

Division at each hospital. (Rejected)

Resolution No. 639 (Submitted by the Department of Pacific Areas)

INCLUSION OF VETERANS TRAVELING AND RESIDING ABROAD
ALL-INCLUSIVE MEDICAL SERVICE UNDER THE
FOREIGN MEDICAL PROGRAM (FMP)

WHEREAS, services under the Foreign Medical Program (FMP) are strictly limited to the treatment of service-connected disabilities, regardless of a veteran's VA rating adjudication; and

WHEREAS, at this time current law prevents the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) from establishing a VA Fee-Basis Program outside the United States; and

WHEREAS, the Fee Basis Program is solely for veterans receiving non-VA hospital care and medical services in the United States and is applicable to veterans residing or traveling abroad; and

WHEREAS, reimbursement for a veteran travel under the FMP is limited to Compensation and Pension (C&P) examinations and transportation for a veteran to the nearest medical facility when life-threatening emergencies occur; now, therefore

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that we fully support expanding the Foreign Medical Program so that it provides all-inclusive medical service to veterans who have been adjudicated by VA as 100% disabled. (Approved)

Resolution No. 640 (Submitted by Department of Ohio)

SERVICE CONNECTION FOR TRAUMATIC BRAIN INJURY

WHEREAS, Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI) has become common place among OIF/OEF veterans due to the preponderance of Improvised Explosive Devices (IED) on the battlefield, remarkable advances in military medicine, and greater awareness of the condition; and

WHEREAS, there is a higher rate of concussions due to IEDs; in-coming mortars, etc.; and

WHEREAS, thousands of veterans' of World War II, Korea, Viet Nam and numerous other conflicts suffered concussions, head wounds, and other trauma to the head and lived for years or decades without proper treatment; and

WHEREAS, many TBI events that are directly attributable to military service occur in training incidents and in other predicaments off the battlefield; and

WHEREAS, a great number of veterans have filed claims for conditions that are now associated with TBI and were denied service connection; now, therefore

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans' of Foreign Wars of the United States, that we support legislation and regulations requiring the Department of Veteran Affairs perform outreach to those veterans of other eras with verifiable head injuries and trauma; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that we request legislation to require that those veterans who have previously been denied and reopen claims for service connection for head injury residuals be granted service connection with an effective date of the original claim. (Approved as Amended)

Resolution No. 641 (Submitted by the Department of Ohio)

VIET NAM VETERANS' EQUITY ACT

WHEREAS, the Senate and Congress introduced S-1629 and HR-3612 which are still in committee and which are opposed by the Department of Veterans' Affairs; and

WHEREAS, over the decade from 1961 to 1972, our military forces sprayed approximately 21 million gallons of herbicide agents in Vietnam; and

WHEREAS, these herbicide agents, the most common of which was designated "Agent Orange," contained the contaminant dioxin, one of the most toxic substances known to humankind; and

WHEREAS, the dispersion and deposition of, and human exposure to, dioxins were not limited to areas directly sprayed, inasmuch as it acknowledged that the chemical was carried away from the areas of application by canals, rivers, and streams, and that airborne particulates were carried by wind drift; and

WHEREAS, Congress has therefore provided that, for purposes of establishing or presuming service connection for a disability or death as related to herbicide exposure, a veteran who, during active military, naval, or air service, "served in the Republic of Vietnam during the period beginning on January 9, 1962, and ending on May 7, 1975, shall be presumed to have been exposed during such service to [a] herbicide agent . . . unless there is affirmative evidence to establish that the veteran was not exposed to any such agent" during that service; and

WHEREAS, the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) has arbitrarily interpreted "served in the Republic of Vietnam" to mean only service on land areas of Vietnam and not waters offshore within its national boundaries; and

WHEREAS, the exclusion of territorial seas or waters from the term

“Republic of Vietnam” is contrary to the plain and unqualified language of the law and illogical insofar as its premise is that herbicides could be carried away from the area of application across any expanse of land but not equal or lesser expanses of water; and

WHEREAS, various illnesses have been linked to and are presumed due to exposure to these herbicide agents; and

WHEREAS, veterans who served on ships no more distant from the spraying of these herbicides than many who served on land are arbitrarily and unjustly denied benefits of the presumption of exposure and thereby the presumption of service connection for their herbicide-related disabilities; therefore

BE IT RESOLVED that the Veterans of Foreign Wars Department of Ohio urge the National Body to support the legislation known as the Agent Orange Equity Act of 2011 and the Viet Nam Veterans’ Equity Act which will expressly provide that “served in the Republic of Vietnam” includes service in the waters offshore. (Approved)

Resolution No. 642 (Submitted by Commander-in-Chief)

ADDITIONAL BENEFITS AND SERVICES TO VETERANS CHILDREN WITH SPINA BIFIDA

WHEREAS, the President of the United States, the United States Congress, and the Secretary of Veterans Affairs, with the leading active support of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, have worked together to enact legislation for benefits to Vietnam and pertinent Korean veterans children suffering with debilitating congenital Spina Bifida Cystica; and

WHEREAS, persons born with Spina Bifida Cystica typically experience paraplegia or quadriplegia, hydrocephalus, progressive scoliosis, bowel and bladder dysfunction, learning disabilities, a multiple of other conditions and disabilities, and a shortened life span; and

WHEREAS, the laws do not authorize some critically important comprehensive health care coverage, such as attendant services, independent living services (except those incidental to training), non-vocational educational assistance, and adaptations for vehicles and housing; and

WHEREAS, the most severely affected claimants are in desperate need of these critical additional services; and

WHEREAS, the number of Spina Bifida claims received by the Department of Veterans Affairs is well below the maximum range initially projected, thus resulting in an underestimate of the appropriated government cost for this program; now, therefore

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, we urge Congress to enact legislation to provide Vietnam and pertinent Korean veterans children with Spina Bifida Cystica with comprehensive health care coverage that will now include attendant services, independent living services, special adaptive housing and adaptive automobile equipment. (Approved)

**COMMITTEE ON NATIONAL BY-LAWS,
MANUAL OF PROCEDURE AND RITUAL**

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Vice Chairman: Glen M. Gardner, Jr., Past Commander-in-Chief, Texas

(Room F4-5, Reno Sparks Convention Center)

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Alaska	Martin Miller	9785
Arizona	Allen "Gunner" Kent	9972
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California	Mike Maynor	52
California	Buford Maples	5985
Colorado	Ronald Lattin	5061
Colorado	Charles Watkins	3917
Colorado	Wayne Thompson	5061
Colorado	Ronald Davies	9644
Connecticut	Robert Tozzoli	9929
Connecticut	Ronald Rusakiewicz	9460
Delaware	Paul Phillips	2863
Dist. of Col.	William Bennett	346
Europe	Peter Mascetti	10658
Florida	W Bachand	4287
Florida	Anthony Gardner	10140
Florida	Robert Young	10137
Florida	William Bloomquist	7674
Florida	Eugene Perrino	10087
Georgia	Richard Knight	9143
Hawaii	Richard Haake	3850
Idaho	Donald Riegel	889
Illinois	Jerry Foreman	1984
Illinois	Rick Frank	1461
Indiana	William Weberding	3183
Indiana	Allen Chlupacek	1954
Iowa	John Chidester	817
Kansas	Terry Fletcher	3115
Kansas	Robert Greene	7397
Louisiana	Larry Minton	1736
Louisiana	Norwood Meche	9822
Maine	Thomas Lussier	6859
Maine	Louis Peterson	6859
Maryland	Thomas Rippon	8276
Maryland	Victor Fuentealba	9083
Massachusetts	Richard Peterson	1012
Massachusetts	Robert Wessa	697
Massachusetts	Augustus Gatti	608
Michigan	Gerald Hawkins	3243
Michigan	Jerry Newberry	2492
Michigan	Jack Pray	3243
Michigan	Robert Weiss	2406

Department	Name	Post No.
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Minnesota	Donald Dallman	806
Mississippi	Danny Williams	3685
Missouri	Lawrence Maher	7356
Missouri	James Holmes	5717
Missouri	Kevin Jones	7356
Missouri	Brad Denny	2593
Nebraska	Roger Broeker	1504
Nevada	Leslie Fiester	10047
New Hampshire	Daniel Greenlaw	816
New Hampshire	Clarence Nelson	3968
New Hampshire	Eugene Pawlik	1617
New Jersey	Joseph Orlando	5941
New Jersey	Francis Nelson	7164
New York	Harold Burke	1895
New York	Dennis Sullivan	4927
North Carolina	James Goins	9488
North Dakota	Wayne Paulson	753
Ohio	Gerald Ward	5713
Ohio	George Dountz	8736
Ohio	Harry Crabtree	9092
Oklahoma	Donald Fenter	5263
Oregon	Dennis Guthrie	4108
Pacific Areas	William Wichmann	727
Pennsylvania	John Brenner	2493
Pennsylvania	Glenn Umberger	7155
Pennsylvania	Jack Snyder	3376
Pennsylvania	John Getz	3376
Rhode Island	Michael Corriveau	5392
Rhode Island	Melvin Defoe	11519
South Dakota	Rick Barg	628
South Dakota	Verne Hansen	2118
Tennessee	Larry Helser	11160
Texas	Kenneth Burton	9182
Texas	Carlos Sustaita	8787
Utah	Brent Neilsen	10900
Vermont	Robert Brennan	782
Virginia	J. Gary Wagner	3150
Virginia	John McNeill	5412
Washington	Filiberto Rivera	992
West Virginia	Donald Young	3466
West Virginia	Robert Kish	4442
Wisconsin	Michael Borg	2778
Wyoming	Rodney Birkle	3558

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Arkansas	Todd Willey	1322
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Connecticut	Robert Bailey	10153
Connecticut	Donald O'Connor	9066
Delaware	Gary Frederick	2863
Dist. of Col.	Lester Hansen	2979
Europe	Billy Barber	10436
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Florida	Laurence Schatz	3559
Florida	Harry Paul	10069
Georgia	Nathan Jackson	4830
Illinois	Robert Crider	2801
Illinois	William Wolff	7539
Illinois	Donovan Smith	3455
Illinois	Jeffrey Hastings	805
Indiana	William Shoultz	3587
Indiana	Daniel Fuller	2953
Iowa	Dennis Abel	1797
Kansas	Robert Greene	7397
Kentucky	Paul Worthington	1168
Latin Amer/Carib	Jose Claudio	3822
Louisiana	Wesley Mitchell	3337
Maryland	Michael Perini	8672
Maryland	Denise Perry	6054
Massachusetts	William Madera	1702
Massachusetts	Edgar Docherty	1526
Massachusetts	James Golden	662
Michigan	Matthew David	423
Michigan	Paul Mc Ivor	8594
Minnesota	Steven Sanders	1403
Minnesota	David Adams	1782
Mississippi	Johnnie Richard	2539
Missouri	Olin Parks	4680
Montana	Timothy Peters	10010
Nebraska	Michael Medina	3113
New Hampshire	Travis Bill	808
New Hampshire	Russell Gora	5791
New Jersey	Thomas Farrell	3020
New Jersey	Christopher Bober	7164
New Jersey	Richard Smith	4463

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New York	Robert Barnhart	686
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New York	Raymond Schultheis	307
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North Carolina	Euell Griggs	12120
Ohio	Teresa Tobias	1060
Ohio	John Keirns	7174
Ohio	Frederick Lavery	1060
Oklahoma	Larry Moore	4518
Pennsylvania	Larry Reece	5667
Pennsylvania	Raymond Shipp	1754
Pennsylvania	Larry Wade	7377
Rhode Island	Roger Lavoie	5392
South Carolina	Clarence Hammett	4941
South Dakota	Dennis Sharp	2038
South Dakota	Michael Mullen	2730
Tennessee	William Maillet	7175
Texas	John Lozanski	5076
Texas	Charles Ratliff	6797
Texas	Edward Torres	4815
Texas	Jimmie Cantrell	9168
Utah	Warren Johnson	6395
Vermont	John Alger	790
Virginia	Daniel Maderic	5311
Virginia	John McNeill	5412
Washington	Ronald Jacobson	1373
West Virginia	Milford Mowrey	9926
Wisconsin	Eric Mortensen	1391

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Alabama	Harry Smith	49
Alaska	John Mattison	9785
Arizona	Kenneth Marshall	8053
Arizona	Tom VonAhlefeld	1763
Arkansas	Patrick Flenniken	2881
Arkansas	James Gilbert	4548
California	Joseph DeShields	9934
California	Dale Smith	3783
California	David Norris	52
Colorado	Peter Buchanan	1771

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Connecticut	Melvin Hewston	9965
Connecticut	Robert Hunter	9086
Delaware	Gerald Thompson	6483
Dist. of Col.	James Wilson	7358
Europe	Stephen Ward	27
Europe	Danny Chapman	3885
Florida	Alan Ayoubee	4250
Florida	Larry Spanish	2550
Florida	Danette Hernandez	7909
Florida	Daniel Duffy	1966
Georgia	Wayne Hagan	6605
Georgia	Milton Keene	6445
Georgia	Charlie Stephenson	2681
Georgia	Michael O' Steen	5976
Georgia	David Pipes	658
Hawaii	Frank Lamson	970
Idaho	Robert Jones	3012
Idaho	Denny Croner	2738
Idaho	John Crotinger	3520
Illinois	Philip Maughan	3873
Illinois	Terry Vance	9789
Illinois	Michael Breyne	1197
Indiana	Nicholas Loffredo	1152
Indiana	Arnold Marion	6606
Indiana	Jack Heflin	2839
Iowa	Christopher Davey	9722
Iowa	Jerry Black	738
Iowa	Darrell Blasberg	2208
Kansas	Darrell Bencken	2981
Kansas	Daniel Parker	852
Kansas	Charles Shoemaker	12003
Kansas	David Cuba	6654
Kansas	Robert Greene	7397
Kentucky	Danny Morrison	5710
Kentucky	Ernest Moscoe	6423
Latin Amer/Carib	Antonio Maldonado	12057
Louisiana	Thomas Kijak	5951
Louisiana	Federico Arends	5951
Maine	Arthur Roy	1603
Maine	Ronald Smith	1761
Maine	Andre Dumas	9389
Maryland	Jack Lewis	194
Maryland	R. Brian Sturgis	5118
Massachusetts	Barry Sobel	834
Massachusetts	Rebecca Silva	5489
Massachusetts	George Murray	1018
Massachusetts	Jeffrey Najarian	1788
Massachusetts	Robert Van Kirk	2394
Massachusetts	Joseph McKean	2394
Massachusetts	Brian Martin	5737

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Massachusetts	Theodore Eaton	2104
Massachusetts	Norman Cook	2394
Michigan	Charles Abner	9885
Michigan	Harry Croyle	6756
Minnesota	Charles Dresen	6208
Minnesota	Patrick Bohmer	246
Minnesota	Donald Nix	5518
Minnesota	Francis Sutherland	246
Mississippi	Charles Singleterry	3036
Mississippi	Donald Verucchi	9573
Mississippi	Wayne Aldridge	10567
Missouri	George Laprade	858
Missouri	Earl Boyer	1831
Missouri	David Morgan	5331
Missouri	Jeffrey Colyer	3838
Montana	Jack Hawley	1087
Nebraska	Sammy DeJohn	8334
Nebraska	John Iossi	3704
Nebraska	Dale Wittrock	10579
Nevada	James Dorsey	8336
New Hampshire	Paul Lloyd	1631
New Hampshire	Joseph Clark	816
New Hampshire	David Ouellette	10722
New Jersey	William Young	370
New Jersey	Daniel Viveiros	2174
New Jersey	Anthony Tomchak	6590
New Jersey	Charles Duffett	3776
New York	Melvin Garrett	6396
New York	William Goebel	5913
New York	Bruce Terwilliger	686
New York	Stanley Board	8734
New York	Michael Spellman	7393
North Carolina	Jason Schoolcraft	8073
North Carolina	Stephen Amos	1134
North Carolina	John Goin	7288
North Carolina	Michael Edwards	2417
North Dakota	Robert Bird	1326
North Dakota	Wallace Bolte	1326
Ohio	Richard Uzl	7727
Ohio	Benny Morris	8054
Ohio	Merton Compton	7424
Ohio	Christopher Haynes	7670
Ohio	Dave Keller	3761
Oklahoma	Shawna Johnson	7322
Oklahoma	Donald Sampley	3608
Oklahoma	Gordon Wheeler	9969
Oregon	Roger Ege	1909
Pacific Areas	Peter Callaghan	3457
Pennsylvania	Charles Feltenberger	2435
Pennsylvania	Donna Coulter	6417
Pennsylvania	Dwight Fuhrman	8896

Department	Name	Post No.
Pennsylvania	Frank Mills	1754
Rhode Island	Armondo Azzinaro	8955
Rhode Island	Leo Swider	2929
Rhode Island	Joseph Cerrito	8018
South Carolina	Albert Landsperger	5928
South Carolina	Frank Fogner	10804
South Dakota	Ray Kerstetter	750
South Dakota	William Barlow	3442
Tennessee	William Barker	5772
Tennessee	John Senatore	4730
Tennessee	Charles Miller	5156
Texas	Larry Konarik	8587
Texas	Julio Harros	12075
Texas	Russell Behrndt	8787
Utah	Norman Nelson	1695
Vermont	Charles Rittenburg	790
Vermont	John Boardman	6689
Vermont	Gary Villa	792
Virginia	Thomas Gimble	1503
Virginia	Gary Kelch	7327
Virginia	James Martin	1503
Virginia	John McNeill	5412
Washington	James Daly	224
West Virginia	Elmer Hibbs	4326
West Virginia	Harold Knotts	896
West Virginia	Robert Caruthers	9926
Wisconsin	Gerald Parchem	987
Wisconsin	Bruce Sorensen	7534
Wisconsin	Larry Kutschma	5811
Wyoming	Donovan Mack	4471
Wyoming	Earl Sellers	4343

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Vice Chairman: James R. Mueller, Past Commander-in-Chief, Missouri

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SUBCOMMITTEE ON POW/MIA

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Vice Chairman: John F. Gwizdak Past Commander-in-Chief, Georgia

(Room D6-7, Reno Sparks Convention Center)

Department	Name	Post No.
Alabama	Lawrence Sepanski	4190
Alaska	Robert Myles	1685

Department	Name	Post No.
Arkansas	Michael Nuckolls	2330
Arkansas	Edward LaVallee	8845
Arkansas	Donald Barnes	8245
California	Alexander Brown	1512
California	Charles Anfuso	2111
Connecticut	Edwin Brown	594
Delaware	Robert McVaugh	3420
Europe	Jefferey Wagaman	27
Europe	Richard Kennedy	27
Florida	Michael White	3559
Florida	Robert Shepherd	4864
Florida	Katrina Smailis	5968
Florida	Julius Sallette	1966
Georgia	Dean Smith	5290
Georgia	Richard Attaway	4629
Hawaii	Randall Mau	2875
Hawaii	Joseph Davis	3391
Illinois	Harold Olsen	4079
Illinois	Barbara Wilson	3455
Illinois	Jules Spindler	4549
Illinois	Glen Goodrich	4495
Indiana	Ronald Himself	673
Indiana	Jerry Blake	1114
Iowa	David Christensen	817
Iowa	Larry Larson	839
Kentucky	Randall McComas	6423
Louisiana	John Fauver	3784
Maine	Peter Miesburger	9389
Maine	Paul Colburn	1761
Maryland	Michael Reamy	9376
Massachusetts	Alvin Smart	2547
Massachusetts	Louis Stifano	1012
Massachusetts	Antone Andrews	697
Massachusetts	Leo Gatti	608
Massachusetts	Roland Gendron	6643
Massachusetts	John Komich	545
Massachusetts	John Leonard	639
Massachusetts	John Robarge	2425
Michigan	Douglas Masseur	701
Michigan	Ernest Meyers	2406
Minnesota	Steven Van Bergen	1296
Minnesota	John Staum	9625
Minnesota	Alcuin Loehr	4847
Mississippi	William Long	4302
Missouri	Paul Frampton	7356
Missouri	Debra Anderson	7356
Missouri	Nancy Cowan	5327
Nebraska	Michael Dunn	5539
Nevada	Herman Hagen	10468
New Hampshire	Ernest Noyes	1698
New Jersey	James Manning	2639

Department	Name	Post No.
New Jersey	Ralph Corno	132
New Jersey	William Bleiler	10886
New Jersey	Albert Bucchi	3020
New Jersey	Ernest Cuff	1795
New Mexico	Vincent Lawrence	7686
New Mexico	Eloy Howard	614
New York	Donald Mackey	5088
New York	James McNally	53
New York	Jack Veazy	2246
New York	Ronald Bush	6433
North Carolina	Brian Boze	2423
Ohio	Barton Beck	9289
Ohio	Robert Mulligan	9893
Ohio	Bradley Price	1516
Oklahoma	Harlan Bjorgo	7322
Oklahoma	Robert Clark	4876
Oregon	George Carroll	3973
Pacific Areas	Gerald Kraus	1509
Pennsylvania	Peter Hook	6393
Pennsylvania	Dominic DeFranco	764
Pennsylvania	Cecil Dennis	5958
Pennsylvania	John Biedrzycki	418
Rhode Island	Garry Crum	12095
Rhode Island	Frank Lightowler	6342
South Carolina	M. Gunter	8738
South Dakota	Russel Dramstad	1776
South Dakota	Todd Struwe	2118
South Dakota	Darwin Tolzin	2118
Tennessee	Curtis Hudson	3380
Texas	N. F. Layne	8560
Texas	James Hoffman	8587
Texas	Dennis Barber	3892
Texas	Arthur Richards	4010
Vermont	Donald Dockter	792
Virginia	Diane Mofield	3219
Washington	Thomas Darling	9301
West Virginia	Melvin Reed	573
West Virginia	Scottie King	1064
Wisconsin	Walter Hogan	6498
Wisconsin	John Schultz	10262
Wyoming	James Pedersen	2673

NATIONAL COMMITTEE ON VETERANS SERVICE RESOLUTIONS

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Wisconsin

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Vice Chairman: Kenneth Thie, Florida

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Chairman: Barry Walter, Illinois
Vice Chairman: Joy Mikyska, North Dakota

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SUBCOMMITTEE III – ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY/OTHER

Chairman: Bill Dozier, Maryland
Vice Chairman: Lee Kichen, Florida

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Department	Name	Post No.
Alabama	Lorenzo Landrum	10366
Alabama	Gregory Usrey	2702
Alaska	Gerry Glover	9785
Arizona	William Chagnon	5990
Arizona	Dennis Dole	769
Arizona	Roger Gowen	7968
Arkansas	Michael Griffin	8671
Arkansas	Fred Steube	9095
California	Mary Baker	2542
California	Mark Barrett	5477
Colorado	Terrance Jacobson	3471
Connecticut	Ronald Christopher	5095
Connecticut	Richard Di Federico	7330
Connecticut	Gary Waterhouse	10251
Delaware	Mark Newman	3238
Delaware	Darlene Stiff	475
Dist. of Col.	William Bradshaw	284
Dist. of Col.	Clifford Fields	2979
Dist. of Col.	Troy Gatling	341
Europe	Lance Howard	10557
Europe	Dale Nagan	10708
Florida	Raymond Jarvis	3991
Florida	Lee Kichen	12055
Florida	Robert Poucher	8083
Florida	Kenneth Thie	10094
Georgia	Martha Hurst	6605
Georgia	William Sandberg	3679
Hawaii	Norbert Enos	2875
Idaho	Tom Ressler	63
Idaho	Patrick Teague	63

Department	Name	Post No.
Illinois	Paul Kallembach	2287
Illinois	Kenneth Seay	9759
Illinois	Barry Walter	5220
Indiana	John Ayres	1152
Indiana	David Capshaw	1152
Indiana	James McClure	2749
Indiana	Randy Muston	1114
Iowa	Jacob Gruber	738
Iowa	Travis Holden	738
Iowa	James Huseboe	839
Kansas	Bobby Cox	2715
Kansas	J. T. Plummer	8873
Kansas	Larry Rowilson	2981
Kentucky	Alexander Feher	5829
Kentucky	Gerald Kayrouz	1170
Latin Amer/Carib	Leopoldo Allen	3822
Louisiana	Mark Ashley	3121
Louisiana	Mitchell Cota	6706
Maine	Gerald Francis	1641
Maine	Cornelius Ware	887
Maine	Kevin Woodward	11553
Maryland	William Dozier	9619
Maryland	Raymond Kelley	160
Maryland	David Oswald	9862
Maryland	Mary Walters	10077
Massachusetts	Charles Brunaccini	1012
Massachusetts	Jorge Castro	1018
Massachusetts	Donald Couture	3236
Massachusetts	Robert Gallagher	834
Massachusetts	Walter Gansenberg	834
Massachusetts	Francis Hayden	905
Massachusetts	Christian Kulikoski	144
Massachusetts	Donald Lafond	7239
Massachusetts	George Mengel	6645
Massachusetts	James Morrissey	3264
Michigan	Daniel Crocker	796
Michigan	Richard Lehner	3733
Michigan	Jerry Smith	7581
Michigan	George Wygant	701
Minnesota	Thomas Hanson	1639
Minnesota	Louie Mrozek	6316
Minnesota	James Tuorila	428
Mississippi	William Ellerby	10024
Mississippi	Raybon Windham	9122
Missouri	Philip Duncan	7356
Missouri	Dennis Flynn	2866
Missouri	Christopher Johnston	1014
Montana	Michael Bennett	4042
Montana	Robert Schwegel	6786
Nebraska	James Pierce	5547
Nebraska	Eric Williams	7102

Department	Name	Post No.
Nevada	Denise Estes	10053
New Hampshire	Lewis Chipola	483
New Hampshire	Jorg Dreusicke	10722
New Hampshire	Mark McCabe	10722
New Jersey	Anthony Albano	7927
New Jersey	Bernard McElwee	10184
New Mexico	Charles Eaton	9515
New Mexico	Fred Ortiz	5890
New York	Harold Leavor	9487
New York	Thomas Todaro	53
New York	James Vinsonhaler	7127
North Carolina	Frances Crawford	10
North Carolina	Cleophus Summers	1134
North Dakota	James Hapala	7564
North Dakota	Joy Mikyska	7564
North Dakota	Dale Ronning	7564
Ohio	Terry Brown	3331
Ohio	Francis Clendenen	9473
Ohio	Robert Critell	9936
Ohio	Wayne Hutchison	7670
Oklahoma	Curtis Bohlman, M.D.	1335
Oklahoma	Robert Carter	4884
Oklahoma	Michael Devenitch	8706
Oklahoma	Ronald Slowik	2270
Oregon	Norman Henshen	7384
Oregon	James Willis	584
Oregon	Jackie Zule	922
Pacific Areas	Alfred Serrato	9876
Pacific Areas	Robert Zaher	2485
Pennsylvania	John Foster	7213
Pennsylvania	Allen Jones	21
Pennsylvania	William Mayer	8896
Pennsylvania	Michael McLane	7069
Pennsylvania	John Rybcinski	3474
Rhode Island	Ernest Frappier	6342
Rhode Island	Ryan Gallucci	152
Rhode Island	Allen Wagonblott	5392
South Carolina	Dentist Harvin	6500
South Dakota	Roland Enninga	2730
South Dakota	Thomas Hafner	3298
Tennessee	Raymond Rich	4641
Tennessee	John Scott	4848
Tennessee	Donald Smith	2120
Tennessee	Gary Whitlock	5266
Texas	Sandra Covin	6008
Texas	Robert Dickerson	9186
Texas	Norman Macey	4816
Utah	Sanford Rosenthal	3586
Utah	Otto Stuart	3586
Vermont	John Buttolph	9653
Vermont	Malcolm MacAskill	792

Department	Name	Post No.
Virginia	William Davis	1115
Virginia	Gerald Manar	609
Virginia	Mark Marth	1503
Washington	Jerry Herker	3386
Washington	Gary Spevak	2669
West Virginia	Samuel Baldwin	1212
West Virginia	Clifford Gwinn	3466
West Virginia	Charles Haney	7048
Wisconsin	David Goeldner	1865
Wisconsin	Philip Jasinski	2895
Wisconsin	Thomas Lemmer	6377
Wisconsin	Frank Wilke	6377
Wyoming	Gary Mathisen	2221

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Vice Chairman: Thomas A. Pouliot, Past Commander-in-Chief, Montana

Chairman: Clifford G. Olson, Jr., Past Commander-in-Chief, Massachusetts

Vice Chairman: Thomas A. Pouliot, Past Commander-in-Chief, Montana

Department	Name	Post No.
Missouri	Kevin C. Jones	7356
Florida	William C. Bloomquist	7674